

Re-envisioning Literature and History:
An Annotated Translation of Two Short Stories by Jin Renshun

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Abstract

Jin Renshun (b. 1970) is one of the most influential Chinese female authors born during the 1970s. From the mid- 1990s onward, she has written a large number of works in a range of genres and themes including play scripts and movie screenplays. As a Chinese citizen with Korean heritage, often referred to as Korean-Chinese, or of the Korean-Chinese ethnic minority, Jin Renshun grew up in a family steeped in Korean language and culture. While she writes about a wide range of topics, throughout her career she has consistently written period short stories about ancient Korean kingdoms. Her works, “Spring in the Conquered City” and “The Entertainer”, both translated here, are two examples in this genre that demonstrate her inventive approach to writing about ethnic Korean culture.

While Jin’s prolific career has garnered much attention from scholars in China, there has been virtually no scholarly work done on her in English and very few of her works have been translated into English. Furthermore, the manner in which these short stories re-envision the Korean literary canon as well as historical events in Korean history highlights the unique perspectives and insights she has developed in part through her bi-cultural Korean-Chinese identity. The short stories translated here and the accompanying analysis constitute an attempt to bring much deserved attention to her works and understand them in the context of both Chinese and Korean literary traditions.

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Introduction

Jin Renshun (b. 1970) is one of the most influential Chinese female authors born during the 1970s. From the mid- 1990s onward, she has written a large number of works in a range of genres and themes, including play scripts and movie screenplays. As a Chinese citizen with Korean heritage, often referred to as Korean-Chinese, or of the Korean-Chinese ethnic minority¹, Jin Renshun grew up in a family steeped in Korean language and culture. While she writes about a wide range of topics, throughout her career she has consistently written period short stories about ancient Korean kingdoms. Her works, “Spring in the Conquered City” and “The Entertainer”, both translated here, are two examples in this genre that demonstrate her inventive approach to writing about ethnic Korean culture and her liberating depiction of courtesan women in these periods.

While Jin’s prolific career has garnered much attention from scholars in China, there has been virtually no scholarly work done on her in English and very few of her works have been translated into English.² Furthermore, the manner in

¹ The use of the term Korean-Chinese here is intended to convey the meaning of the Chinese term 朝鲜族 (Chaoxianzu) which refers to a Chinese citizen of Korean ethnicity. In Korean the term is 조선족 (Chosŏnjok).

² Jin’s short story, “The Entertainer”, translated here with analysis, was also translated without analysis by Karen Gernant as an unpublished sample work translated in conjunction with Jin’s 2010 residency in University of Iowa International Writing Program. “The Courtesan.” Unpublished Sample Work. Translated by Karen Gernant. University of Iowa International Writing Program, 2010. <http://iwp.uiowa.edu/writers/jin-renshun> Accessed December, 26, 2013.

which these short stories re-envision the Korean literary canon and historical events in Korean history highlights the unique perspectives and insights she has developed in part through her bi-cultural Korean-Chinese identity. The short stories translated here and the accompanying analysis constitute an attempt to bring much deserved attention to her works and understand them in the context of both Chinese and Korean literary traditions.

Jin's career as a writer took off in the mid 1990s after graduating from Jilin Art Institute in 1995, where she majored in theatre.³ She began to publish in 1996 with her short story "Love's Litmus Paper"⁴ and very quickly found success in the short story genre, which has continued to be her primary focus. From 1996 until 2008 she published over 40 short stories and novellas.⁵

Wang Hui argues that most of Jin Renshun's works can be categorized into one of three categories: works dealing with love and marriage, those about growing up, and works set in ancient Korean kingdoms.⁶ This research deals with the final category.

On the one hand, many of her works reflect the broader themes of modern Chinese literature, especially New-Historical literature, which emphasizes the deconstruction of so-called historical truth. Instead of presenting history on the

³ Xia, Zhenying 夏振影, "Lun Jin Renshun de gudian tical xiaoshuo chuanguo" (master's thesis, Northeast Normal University, 2009), 1.

⁴ Jin, Renshun 金仁顺, "Aiqing shitu," *Zuojia* 12 (1996).

⁵ For a complete list of Jin's works up to 2008, see Xia Zhenying, 22.

⁶ Wang, Hui 王慧, "Cong 'Chunxiangzhuan' dao 'Chunxiang'" (master's thesis, Shaanxi Normal University, 2012), 6.

macro scale of countries, it focuses instead on the micro level reality of individual people and their ordeals. In Chinese literature, New-Historical writers have often emphasized growing up in the midst of great suffering, such as Yu Hua and Su Tong⁷. Much of Jin Renshun's writing likewise reflects the suffering and the dismal reality of growing up in a cruel world, echoing these Chinese New-Historicists.

While Jin did not experience the great hardships of the Cultural Revolution, which informed the writings of many of these writers, Qing Guo describes how Jin's experience growing up in the coal mining town of Baishan in Jilin province, and the regular experience of friends and community members dying in the mines, made her view the world with indifference and cold detachment. Qing Guo claims that these experiences helped shape her style of writing that ebbs out of this "detached" world-view.⁸ Similarly, Jin's writing also reflects an emphasis on urban life with narratives centered on the "everydayness" of urban life, a key characteristic of Neo-Realist literature.

When it comes to Korean topics, however, Jin Renshun's palette of thematic expressions broadens greatly, illustrating how her bi-cultural background has allowed her to expand her literary repertoire and informed her re-interpretation of Korean literature and history. Her personal background as a member of the Korean-Chinese minority group in China has indeed played an important role in her development as an author, her writing style and the subjects she writes about, and is

⁷ Li, Hua, *Contemporary Chinese Fiction by Su Tong and Yu Hua: Coming of Age in Troubled Times*. (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 2-3.

⁸ Qing, Guo 青果, "Jin Renshun de mofa he," *Times Literature Magazine* 5 (2009): 1.

especially relevant to the stories she has written that take place in ancient Korean kingdoms.

While her Korean language skills are limited, she has maintained a strong connection to the culture of her parents to this day and she draws inspiration from her Korean-Chinese cultural roots. In an interview with Deng Rubing in 2013, she said that the essential characteristics of the Korean people continue to be a vital part of her daily life, even though she is not fluent in the language:

Actually, I have never been far removed from my ethnic identity. Although don't speak Korean well, Korean-Chinese culture has had a strong impact on or our daily living; what we eat and the clothing we wear. My parents always speak Korean to me and I feel deeply attached to the Korean language.⁹

In the early stages of her career, Jin Renshun did make an effort to highlight her ethnic identity in the public eye and in her works. She did not claim to be an “ethnic minority” writer per se and in fact asserts that others applied this label onto her.¹⁰ Nonetheless, as her career has unfolded, she has increasingly come to embrace her ethnic identity and her role as a representative of Korean-Chinese creative production and identifies her Korean culture and heritage as one of her primary inspirations.¹¹

Furthermore, there is a very tangible contrast between her works that portray Korean women in classical settings and her stories narrating mundane life

⁹ Jin, Renshun 金仁顺, “Hanyu xiezuoyu shijie: “Gaoli wangshi” shi wo linghun de guxiang,” Interview by Deng Rubing. *Xihu* 5 (2013), 70. This and all translated excerpts from interviews and articles in this introduction are my own translations.

¹⁰ Ibid, 70.

¹¹ Ibid, 71.

and love in modern Chinese cities. Elaborating on this, she pinpoints how the subject matter completely transforms the tone and style of her writing, elevating the stories to a different level. She indicates that this contrast relates both to her cultural identity and to her effort to introduce Korean culture and customs to Chinese readers unfamiliar with them. She says:

It can clearly be seen how important my ethnic identity is to me. It is the soft part of my inner being. The reason I often write so tidily and succinctly (in works not dealing with Korean topics) is that I feel city life is all the same. Basically I don't need to spend the time to introduce or explain it. But when I write about Korean-Chinese topics, I feel that you all (Han Chinese) don't understand us, and I need to write about these topics that you see as trivial.¹² I write about the details of our food, clothing, housing and everyday leisurely pursuits to let you all understand the unique qualities of our 'ethnicity'. Because of this, the tempo of my writing is completely different.¹³

Historical Background and Literature of the Korean-Chinese Ethnic Minority

The people of Korean ethnicity in Northeast China, specifically in the Yanbian region close to the North Korean border, have had nearly one hundred years of history living in Chinese territory. Despite groups of Koreans who lived in Chinese territory in Northeast China during the Ming and Qing dynasties, the large-scale movement of Koreans across the border into China did not happen until the turn of the century. At that time, the government's declining authority, Korea's economic problems and Japanese and Russian influence, "caused the number of Koreans to

¹² Original Chinese text: "我就觉得你们不了解我们,我有必要写一些闲笔。"

¹³ Ibid, 71.

increase rapidly to 100,000 in Yanbian around the turn of the century”.¹⁴ This number only increased as Japanese aggression on the Korean peninsula gained momentum and increased in intensity. Robinson notes how “the harsh repression that accompanied the advent of Japanese rule drove many political activists into exile after 1910”, and that large numbers of Koreans flocked to Northeast China, as well as Russia and the United States as part of the worldwide Korean diaspora.¹⁵

With the start of Japanese aggression in northeast China in 1931, and continuing over twenty-five years until the Hundred Flowers campaign in 1956, there emerged many political and economic factors that over several decades helped forge a Chinese national identity while maintaining a strong sense of Korean ethnic identity among the Korean-Chinese. Prime among these factors were: the attachment the ethnic Korean community had developed to the land by opening the Yanbian region to agriculture, their collaboration with the Chinese in three successive wars; the Chinese War of Resistance Against Japan (1937-1945), the War of Liberation (1947-1949), and the Korean War (1950-1953), and finally the ethnic policies of the People’s Republic of China.¹⁸

Literary works written by Korean-Chinese authors in Yanbian in this period, mostly in the Korean language and translated into Chinese, provide a window into

¹⁴ Chae-Jin Lee, *China's Korean Minority: The Politics of Ethnic Education* (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1986), 16.

¹⁵ Michael Edson Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 52.

¹⁸ Lee, 54.

the odyssey of millions of individuals whose lives have been shaped by these events. The writings of Korean-Chinese authors, mostly written in Korean in the years after the Korean War and the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, encompass a wide range of themes central to their experiences as a diaspora community. Nan Xifeng analyzes Korean-Chinese song lyrics written in Korean after the founding of the People's Republic of China and suggests that there are seven primary themes that emerged: songs that praise of the Communist party and the motherland, express attachment to their native soil, express Korean ethnic unity, praise the natural landscape, explore truth and beauty, reflections on a life of physical labor, and that tell of the reform period.¹⁹ Although her analysis focuses only on songs, similar themes can be seen in early Korean-Chinese literature that has been translated into Chinese.²⁰

Additionally, these wars also played an important role for the Korean-Chinese in deepening their emotional connection with their new home and have had a long-term impact on how they view themselves politically and culturally. Ma points out that these sacrifices had a long-term impact on the identity of the Korean Chinese population; "Many Korean people shed their precious blood in this land, and

¹⁹ Nan, Xifeng, "Jianguo hou Chaoxianzu geci wenxue suotan," *Journal of Yanbian University* 2 (1990): 39-43.

²⁰ Despite the abundance of early Korean-Chinese literature written in Korean, only some of these writings have been translated into Chinese.

as the descendants of these national heroes, today's younger generations of Korean-Chinese have a special attachment to the land and are proud of it.”²¹

The end of the Korean War witnessed a dramatic expansion of Korean education and a blossoming of Korean literature, both of which had been strictly repressed during the later colonial years. Lee describes how this “golden age” made “(ethnic) Koreans feel proud of being Korean” and that they “aggressively asserted their ethnic identity as distinct from the Han Chinese civilization.”²² He also describes how this movement was also greatly stimulated by the influx of Korean intellectuals from North Korea. The number of Korean primary and secondary schools multiplied and for years were organized from the grassroots by the Korean communities in the area.²³ These schools emphasized Korean language, culture and history education. This emphasis on Korean education was not limited to primary and secondary education, but also included the establishment of a major institution of higher education at Yanbian University where “all instruction was given in the Korean language.”²⁴ Such institutions illustrated steps toward reinforcing Korean ethnic identity.

It seems that the strongest expressions of cultural distinctiveness from this period were not translated into compilations in Chinese, especially after the

²¹ Ma, C.H, "Language practice and identity of Korean-Chinese bilinguals in Yanji" (PhD diss., Michigan State University 2004), 93.

²² Lee, 69.

²³ Ibid., 56.

²⁴ Ibid., 69.

Hundred Flowers Campaign in 1957 that cut short the renaissance of ethnic expression and any perspectives not endorsed by the Communist Party.²⁵ Not surprisingly, from this period well until after the Cultural Revolution, there was little room for any cultural or ethnic expression in literature and many Korean-Chinese authors were imprisoned.²⁶ Lee says, “the intrinsic value of ethnically-based education was completely abjured... and for all practical purposes Yanbian University lost its Korean character.”²⁷ Due to these events during the Cultural Revolution, Korean-Chinese cultural, educational and literary activity so was greatly impeded that the Yanbian Educational Bureau wrote:

For a decade since 1966, our prefecture’s minority education received a historically unprecedented calamity... the special characteristics of minority education were annihilated, the use of minority language was discarded and restricted, and the programs to train minority-teaching personnel and to produce minority-language textbooks were thoroughly destroyed.²⁸

Reflection on the tribulations of this period can be seen in works resembling “scar literature”, a genre of Chinese literature from the late 70s that looked back on the difficulties of the Cultural Revolution. Such works were written by Korean-Chinese authors into the early 80s, such as Lin Yuanchun who wrote the short stories, “Pink Clouds” (彩霞) and “Between Relatives” (亲戚之间), in Chinese.

²⁵ Lee, 77-78.

²⁶ Ibid., 92-93

²⁷ Ibid., 95.

²⁸ *Yonbyon Kyoyuk*, 3 (1979): 4, quoted in Lee, 90.

While it seems that less research has been done by Chinese scholars on Korean-Chinese literature from the 70s-90s, works from this period reflect the generational shift from first and second generation Korean native speakers, and to third and fourth generation Korean-Chinese, who were likely to have a stronger grasp on Chinese language than Korean. Not surprisingly, from this time on, it seems that works by Korean-Chinese authors were written more and more in Chinese, rather than in Korean. Jin Renshun's works also fall in this category.

Nonetheless, from the 70s to the 90s South Korean literature had an increasingly large impact on Korean-Chinese literature. Li Guangyi says that South Korean literature dealing with topics of being uprooted from home and feeling out of place as a result of the Korean War was especially influential in this regard.²⁹ A few Chinese scholars even bemoan that modern Korean-Chinese authors imitated the trends of South Korean literature.³⁰

Despite these literary parallels, after the normalization of relations between China and South Korea in 1992, the reunion of Korean-Chinese families with their South Korean relatives was, on the whole, not a smooth encounter at all. Jin Renshun wrote the screenplay of a made for TV series that is set in both Northeast China and South Korea and that deals with the re-integration of Koreans from the Korean peninsula and Korean-Chinese living in northeast China. This series, called *Mom's Fermented Soybean Paste Stew Restaurant*, directly confronts contemporary

²⁹ Li, Guangyi 李光一, "20 shiji houqi zhongguo chaoxianzu yu hanzu wenxue sichao zhi guanlian," *Studies of Ethnic Literature* 2 (2004): 88.

³⁰ Zhang, Xuanping 张玄平, "Zhongguo chaoxianzu wenxue de chulu zai nali?" *Journal of Anshan Normal University* 7, no. 5 (2005): 65.

problems such as the emergence of a cultural rift between South Korean nationals and Korean-Chinese in their mutual effort to reconnect after more than 40 years of separation.³¹

Jin Renshun's Korean Period Short Stories

Jin Renshun blazes her own trail with one-of-a-kind period short stories that re-envision Korean traditional culture, literature and history through the eyes of modern perspectives. Xia Zhenying states that her Korean period pieces have “opened a window, allowing us to understand the experiences and customs of the Korean-Chinese.”³²

In addition to the pieces translated here, a few of her other key works showcasing Korean traditional culture deserve to be introduced. “Past Events in the Koryŏ Kingdom 高丽往事,”³³ a story set in the 11th century Korean Koryŏ dynasty (918-1392), centers on a musician entertainer named Shilan, whose innocent graceful beauty and outstanding skill playing the kayagŭm 가야금, the Korean zither,

³¹ *Mama de Jiangtang guan* 妈妈的酱汤馆 [Mom's Fermented Bean Paste Restaurant], 2006. Jin Renshun also wrote a novel based on this series. See, Jin Renshun, and Wang Yihan. *Ma ma de jiang tang guan Mama's Miso Restaurant*. (Beijing: The Writers Publishing House, 2007).

³² Xia, Zhenying, 18.

³³ For the original work, see Jin, Renshun, “Gaoli Wangshi,” *Changjiang Wenyi* 12 (1999), 34-37.

arouse the passionate interests of King Hyun Cheung.³⁴ He favors her and she eventually becomes the empress, yet the King no longer visits her and she is all but imprisoned within her passionless role. The King frequents his concubines instead of her and the once passionate relationship between the two sours.³⁵

This story highlights the dynamic contrast between the freedom and passion of their early romance and the binds imposed by the customs and rules of court life. Of interesting note is the cultural reference to the classical Korean song, Arirang, which Shilan sings for the King early in the story, foreshadowing the withering of the love between her and the king. Arirang 아리랑 is a traditional folk song from Korea that has been sung, in many varying forms, for over 600 years. While the exact lyrics vary in each version, the universal theme is that of the heartbreak of abandonment or forced separation, as evidenced by an excerpt from one version of the lyrics, "My Lord going away abandoning me..."³⁶ The inclusion of this song in this story is also interesting given that the song Arirang has been a powerful symbolic expression of Korean identity for people of Korean decent around the world since the early 20th century. David Richard McCann states that "The implicit

³⁴ King Hyun Cheung (Korean 현종 / Chinese 顯宗), was a Koryŏ king who ruled from 1009-1031. Michael J. Seth, *A History of Korea: From Antiquity to the Present*, (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 88.

³⁵ Xia, Zhenying, 3.

³⁶ Kichung Kim, *An Introduction to Classical Korean Literature: From Hyangga to P'ansori* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 40.

symbolism of Arirang as the means for expressing Korean national feelings was made explicit in 1926, with the production of the movie "Arirang."³⁷

In Jin's short story, *P'ansori* 盘瑟俚³⁸, the traditional Korean narrative performance art of *P'ansori* is at stage center. The story narrates the cruel abuse of two generations of women in a household by the husband. The abuse culminates in the daughter killing her father by pushing him into a large wine jar. She is publically accused of murder and deemed guilty until a *P'ansori* singer boldly arrives on the scene, to the surprise of the magistrate, and tells him that she will perform a *P'ansori* piece, after which the magistrate will have to reconsider the case. She then sings a heart-rending performance that brings a flood of tears not only to the accused young lady, but to the large crowd assembled as well.

The crowd stands in silence long after the performance ends until it passionately calls for the liberation of the young woman, rebuking the magistrate and insisting that she be set free. The young lady is released and herself becomes a *P'ansori* singer. While short, and lacking any elaboration of what specific *P'ansori* performance was given in the story, or even any details how the young lady was transformed into a *P'ansori* performer, this piece echoes the power of this dynamic Korean art on the hearts of the people.³⁹

³⁷ David R. McCann, *Form and Freedom in Korean Poetry* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 62.

³⁸ Jin, Renshun, "Panseli 盘瑟俚," *Zuojia* 7 (2000), 93-95.

³⁹ All of the stories mentioned here and numerous other ancient Korean period works by Jin Renshun, including one work relating to Korean Buddhist Dance (*Sengwu* 僧舞) have been compiled into one volume. See Jin, Renshun. *Sengwu* Beijing: Zhongguo duiwai fanyi chubanshe, 2013.

The two pieces translated here, “The Entertainer” and “Spring in the Conquered City”, are significant among Jin’s short stories and important contributions to the body of Chinese literature in translation as they demonstrate the re-envisioning of fundamental elements of both historical events and literary canons on which these stories were based. There are two fundamental ways Jin re-visioned Korean history and literature. One is the glorification of Korean traditional culture and civilization in specific historic events in “Spring in the Conquered City”. The other is the portrayal of women as complex desiring subjects and condemnation of traditional views of women that for centuries burdened and imprisoned women in “The Entertainer”.

“The Entertainer”: Overturning the Legend of Female Submissiveness

While Jin Renshun has consistently written stories with Korean cultural roots, this trend in her writing became most pronounced in 2009 when she published *Chunxiang*⁴⁰, her first full-length novel, that gave a reinterpreted version of the eighteenth century Korean story, “The Tale of Chunhyang”⁴¹, and which is one of the most revered stories in classical Korean literature.⁴²

⁴⁰ Please see Jin, Renshun, *Chunxiang* (Beijing: Zhongguo Funü Chubanshe, 2009).

⁴¹ (Chinese 春香传 / Korean 춘향전)

⁴² For English translations of the original Korean work please see Jae-hyo Shin, *The Tale of Chun Hyang* Translated by Ryong Chul-cho, (United States: Silk Pagoda, 2010); and Richard Rutt and Chong-un Kim, *Virtuous Women: Three Classic Korean Novels* (Seoul, Korea: Kwang Myong Print. Co. for Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch, 1979).

The original story, “The Tale of Chunhyang”, which originated from *P’ansori* traditions from the eighteenth century, tells the legend of Chunhyang, a low class, beautiful daughter of a courtesan and her chance encounter with Mong-ryong, the son of the local governor. Chunhyang and Mong-ryeong fall in love, yet are soon separated. Mong-ryong’s father is posted to Seoul, thus requiring Mong-ryong to also leave, but he vows to return to marry her after he passes the state exam. A new governor is appointed to the area and immediately shows interest in Chunhyang. She refuses the new governor’s advances, vowing her eternal faithfulness and devotion to Mong-ryong. As a result of refusing the governor’s courtship, Chunhyang is put under house arrest until she changes her mind.

Meanwhile, Mong-ryong passes the state exam, is appointed as an imperial censor and returns to find Chunhyang still imprisoned and ready to be executed. Mong-ryong, with his newly appointed powers, arrests the governor and sets Chunhyang free. They are then joyfully married, despite the social obstacles that exist between them, most conspicuously the contrast in their family backgrounds, and the taboo of marriage between of a man of high status and a woman from a lower-class background.⁴³

Its origins as a *P’ansori* opera dealing with a love story between an elite *yangban* and a commoner woman hints at the story’s origins among the lower

⁴³ Readers familiar with classical Chinese literature may find parallels between the original “Tale of Chunhyang” and the thirteenth century Chinese play by Wang Shifu called the *The Story of the Western Wing* 西厢记, Xixiangji, also known in English as *Romance of the West Chamber*. This story also deals with the topic of the taboo of marriage between higher and lower classes. See Wang, Shifu, and Stephen H. West, *The Story of the Western Wing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

classes as a means to indirectly criticize the inequalities of the social system. Indeed, most *P'ansori* operas were made as critiques of the upper classes. Historian E.

Taylor Atkins talks specifically about this in reference to “The Tale of Chunhyang”:

The *p'ansori* opera Ch'unhyang-ka is... a tale of elite corruption and commoner virtue disguised as a Confucian morality tale. The daughter of a lowly *kisaeng*, Ch'unhyang refuses the advances of the local governor to remain chaste for her absent husband, and suffers mightily for it. While *yangban* audiences applauded the story's didactic celebration of wifely fidelity, commoners nodded knowingly to themselves that no hereditary elite had a monopoly on moral virtue.⁴⁴

Perhaps because of the story's emphasis on justice prevailing over class barriers, the story has remained popular in both ancient and modern times. The traditional story of “The Tale of Chunhyang” has been told and retold in virtually every possible media format in pre-modern and modern Korea, including Korean operatic drama (*P'ansori*), poems, novels, films, and television dramas.⁴⁵ The work has been repeatedly cited in classical sources and modern versions of the work continue to reiterate the traditional notions of the ideal behavior of women, and the faithfulness, chastity, and long suffering she endures.⁴⁶

Jin Renshun's novel *Chunxiang*, however, completely turned the original storyline of a faithful, virtuous and obedient woman on its head, demonstrating the

⁴⁴ E. Taylor Atkins, *Primitive Selves Koreana in the Japanese Colonial Gaze, 1910-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 8.

⁴⁵ Hyangjin Lee, "Chunhyang: Marketing an Old Tradition in New Korean Cinema," in *New Korean Cinema*, ed. Chi Shin and Julian Stringer (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 63.

⁴⁶ Kyong-Mi Danyel Kwon, "Reinventing 'Koreanness': 'The Tale of Spring Fragrance' and the Gendered Culture of Colonial Korea." (Ph. D., Harvard University, 2011), 3-15.

main character as a multi-dimensional woman full of desire and who acts upon her desire. The main character not only desires a man besides the one she is supposed to wait patiently for, but also rejects him instead in order to live the life of a courtesan. The novel *Chunxiang* was sketched out more than a decade before in the short story, “The Entertainer”, translated here, which is a much more condensed and less developed version of the story, yet glosses the essential ideas that eventually developed into the novel *Chunxiang*. While *Chunxiang* maintains the basic storyline of “The Entertainer”, it greatly expands the development of the characters and the level of detail and nuance and introduces an even more radical ending. *Chunxiang* has been regarded with high praise and garnered much scholarly and popular attention for Jin Renshun. The social science researcher Xiu Lei, for example, states that “all of Jin Renshun’s previous period pieces dealing with ancient Korean kingdoms were preparing her for the task of writing this rarely encountered work.”⁴⁷

In her reinterpreted versions (both the short story “The Entertainer”, and the full-length novel *Chunxiang*), Jin Renshun tells a story in which the plot and characters are superficially the same as the traditional tale. There is a stark contrast throughout the two works, however, in regard to the inner world of the main character, Chunhyang. In contrast with the one-dimensional traditional portrayal of Chunhyang in “The Tale of Chunhyang”, who persisted in an unquestioned yearning

⁴⁷ Xiu, Lei 修磊, “Jingshenhua xushi yu shikong de lishi jiyi: You Jin Renshun gudian tical xiaoshuo yinfa de yi dian sikao,” *Shandong Social Science* 9 (2013), 79.

to marry Mong-ryong, in “The Entertainer” and *Chunxiang* we see her full of conflict and indeed passionately resistant to the thought of marrying him.

In both “The Entertainer” and *Chunxiang*, Jin paints the picture of a woman whose very motivation is to love many men and become a Gisaeng like her mother. In “The Entertainer”, she waits for Mong-ryong, not out of devotion for him, but rather because her mother has not given her any other option. There is, thus, a stark contrast in the endings of “The Entertainer” and “The Tale of Chunhyang”. While both endings superficially depict the same conclusion, namely the depiction of Chunhyang and Mong-ryong marrying in grand style, in “The Tale of Chunhyang”, the finale is shown as a joyful cause for celebration for all involved. In “The Entertainer”, however, Chunhyang is devastated as her true hopes and desires are squelched by the realization that she will not be able to live a free life with many lovers, like her mother.

The novel *Chunxiang* comes to an even more liberating conclusion for Chunhyang than “The Entertainer” since in *Chunxiang*, Chunhyang not only desires to be with men besides Mong-ryong, but actually acts on her desire. In it, Mong-ryong has arrived too late, only to find that Chunhyang has already become a courtesan like her mother. He is full of regret as he wonders how different things might have been if he had only arrived earlier. Chunhyang, on the other hand is quite content with her choice and lingers with Mong-ryong briefly only to soften the blow to him.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Jin, Renshun, *Chunxiang* (Beijing: Zhongguo Funü Chubanshe [China Women Publishing House], 2009), 221-222.

In addition to the stark differences in the inner world of the protagonist in the original versions of “The Tale of Chunhyang” and Jin Renshun’s versions, there is a subtle yet important addition to the basic storyline. Jin Renshun adds a new character to her version that was not present in the original. Choi-eun, the shoemaker, appears in “The Entertainer” as Chunhyang’s maid Xiangdan’s lover, yet is entirely absent from the original versions of “The Tale of Chunhyang.”⁴⁹ Interestingly, Choi-eun represents Chunhyang’s first “crush”, as she first feels romantic sentiments not towards Mong-ryong, as is typically depicted in versions of “The Tale of Chunhyang”, but rather towards Choi-eun, when he measures her foot to make her a pair of shoes.

Ironically, it is one of the finely crafted shoes made by Choi-eun, which slips off her foot and attracts the attention of Mong-ryong, who spies the shoe in his path as he rides by, providing them the opportunity to meet. The way they meet each other is very different from “The Tale of Chunhyang” in which Mong-ryong spies Chunhyang swinging and asks his attendant to call her over.⁵⁰ Interestingly, Chunhyang’s interest in Choi-eun the shoemaker evokes the longstanding foot fetish evident in Chinese history and literature and that dates back to the Song dynasty (a fetish which ignominiously manifested itself in the practice of foot-binding).⁵¹

⁴⁹ Based on a reading numerous versions of the original story translated into English. See Kim, Chin-yŏng et. al., *Ch'unhyang Chŏn Kwa Han'guk Munhwa*, 33; Richard Rutt and Chong-un Kim, *Virtuous Women: Three Classic Korean Novels*. (Seoul, Korea: Kwang Myong Print. Co. for Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch, 1979), 238-333.

⁵⁰ Rutt, 258.

⁵¹ David Curtis Wright, *The History of China*. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001), 84.

Yet, the existence of multiple versions of this story is far from groundbreaking in itself. Kwon discusses the plethora of new versions of “The Tale of Chunhyang” that were produced in print and film form in Korea while under Japanese colonial rule. She discusses how new technologies and new media allowed these new adaptations to be produced and how they reflected changing perspectives of women, as well as modern and traditional culture.⁵² She says that the many adaptations made during the Colonial Period “became a repository of old and new, tradition and modernity, whose conflicting images and receptions were largely imposed on women in colonial Korea.”⁵³

She also describes how influential the genre of “The Legend of Chunhyang” adaptations was on the development of distinctive film and literature traditions in Korea.

Seventeen leading directors sought to recreate the story of Chunhyang and soon the story came to be known as a guaranteed box office hit. Nowadays, many Korean film critics even claim that one can best understand the development and history of Korean cinema just by examining these variations of the story.⁵⁴

The rapid multiplication of new film versions of “The Tale of Chunhyang” in South Korea is attested by Im Kwon-Taek’s 2000 production version of the story,

⁵² Kyong-Mi Danyel Kwon, "Reinventing 'Koreanness': 'The Tale of Spring Fragrance' and the Gendered Culture of Colonial Korea." (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2011), 3-15.

⁵³ Ibid, 9-10

⁵⁴ Ibid, 3.

Chunhyang, that attracted audiences from around the world.⁵⁵ This recent film version, however, adheres more or less to the traditional plot, emphasizing Chunhyang as the faithful woman waiting for her man.

Viewed in the context of the modern tradition of recreating different adaptations of this tale, Jin Renshun's works may be seen as a continuation of this process of reinventing this classical tale, a process that was most perceptible during Korea's Colonial Period. More importantly, it can also be seen as a revolutionary departure from the time-honored formula, as it transforms Chunhyang into an empowered woman motivated by her own will, not by society's expectation for a faithful woman. Just as new adaptations of this work reflected changing notions of gender in colonial times, Jin's work reflects more contemporary perspectives that have accompanied a transition towards gender equality. Notably, the liberating transformation of Chunhyang has not been present in any other versions, even the most recent South Korean version mentioned previously. It is thus possible to view this work as a first in the history of Korean literature.

Interestingly, one year after Jin published *Chunxiang*, the South Korean film *The Servant* was released, which also retold the "Legend of Chunhyang" with some major revisions.⁵⁶ Primary among these was that Chunhyang did not love Lee Mong-ryong, but rather Mong-ryong's servant, Bangja and depicted Chunhyang with greater agency in her interactions with the men in the story.

⁵⁵ See *Chunhyang*, directed by Im Kwon-taek (2000; Seoul: T'aewŏn, 2000), DVD.

⁵⁶ *The Servant*, directed by Kim Dae-woo (2010; Seoul: CJ Entertainment), DVD.

Both “The Entertainer” and *Chunxiang* thus demonstrate a distinctive characteristic pattern in Jin Renshun’s writing, her portrayal of empowered women in feminist themes in stories set in historical Korean kingdoms. Despite the strict restrictions women encountered during these times, these stories examine women, typically courtesans, who by virtue of their profession, possess significant power, freedom and complexity. Jin Renshun herself testifies to this:

In feudal Korea, the status of women was perhaps even lower than others regions. Moreover, there were strong views concerning family status, regulations prohibiting intermarriage between nobility and commoners, the fact that children born to concubines had absolutely no status. There were many limitations placed on women. I believe that in these feudal times, only prostitutes were truly free.⁵⁷

She describes these women as not mere prostitutes, but artisans whose skill and artistry were so refined that they didn’t necessarily need to sell their bodies and were even able to realize certain dreams of their own.

I like the soaring, lofty disposition of Gisaengs. Many of them survived on their artistic skills, and didn't need to sell their bodies; all they had to do was sell their skill. I feel that women in the brothels were able to realize their own dreams to a certain extent.⁵⁸

The very title of the story testifies to her perspectives on this topic. The title of this work, 伎(Ji in Chinese) is roughly synonymous with the word Gisaeng (妓生 기생) which refers to female musician-dancers who served the royal palace or in

⁵⁷ Jin, Renshun 金仁顺, interview by Deng Rubing, 71.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

noble households in Joseon Korea and who typically were of low social standing.⁵⁹ There is an important distinction, however, in the author's use character 伎, which has the connotation of a skilled musician/dancer entertainer, instead of 妓, which means prostitute. The choice of 伎 may indicate the author's intent to highlight the role of the Gisaeng as skilled entertainers, rather than mere playthings of the aristocrats.

Her comments help us to understand that she did not simply apply the values of contemporary society to traditional stories, but rather she suggests that the lives and inner worlds of female entertainers and women in general in feudal Korea may have been far more complex than what has been passed down in stories like "The Tale of Chunhyang".

The manner that she thus turns the story on its head by making Chunhyang a desiring subject, rather than a desired object, clearly reflects the same trend that characterized many works by Chinese women's writers in the 1990s. Zhang Jingyuan states that in the 1990s Chinese women's literature:

Women no longer appear as mere social functions-mothers, daughters or wives-but as mature female individuals with sexual appetites and great vitality. And whereas in the past, images of women and women's experiences were written largely by men and reflected men's ulterior interests and psychological needs, women's writing today breaks

⁵⁹ Yi Pae-yong, *Women in Korean History* (Seoul, Korea: Ewha Womans University Press, 2008), 73-77.

stereotypes, presenting women in unexpected ways as complicated and very diverse beings.⁶⁰

“Spring in the Conquered City”: Transforming Humiliation into Heroism

Prior to publishing the novel *Chunxiang*, Jin Renshun’s longest short story set in an ancient Korean kingdom was “Spring in the Conquered City”, which tells the tale of two aristocrat brothers and their romances and ambitions within the eighteenth-century Joseon court. The story rises to its climax paralleling the dramatic events leading up to the Second Manchu Invasion of Korea in 1636 in which Qing forces invaded Joseon Korea. Historically, this war and Joseon Korea’s humiliating loss to the Qing precipitated King Injo’s kowtow and submission to Hong Taiji of the Qing and the Crown Prince Sohyŏn’s (1612-1645) imprisonment in the Qing and his early death. These events set the tone of Qing and Joseon politics for centuries to come, and opened the way for ideological schisms between competing Joseon political groups. The resulting “age of bloody factional strife lasted seventy years” and left an indelible mark on the internal politics of Joseon Korea for generations.⁶¹ In “Spring in the Conquered City”, the two brothers Jin Yi’an

⁶⁰ Zhang Jingyuan, "Breaking Open: Chinese Women's Writing in the Late 1980s and 1990s," in *Chinese Literature in the Second Half of A Modern Century: A Critical Survey*, ed. Bangyuan Qi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 164-5.

⁶¹ JaHyun Kim Haboush, “Constructing the Center: The Ritual Controversy and the Search for a New Identity in Seventeenth-Century Korea,” *In Culture and the State in Late Chosŏn Korea*, ed. JaHyun Kim Haboush and Martina Deuchler (Cambridge: Asia Center, Harvard University, 1999), 47.

and especially Jin Yilin are depicted playing key roles in the events that shaped the war.

The protagonist in “Spring in the Conquered City” is a young man of little ambition from an aristocratic family named Jin Yi’an. From a young age, Jin Yi’an lives in the shadow of his brother, Jin Yilin, who excels in all scholarly and martial endeavors. In contrast, Jin Yian engrosses himself in the more leisurely pursuits of calligraphy, poetry, and the game of Go.

Jin Yilin attends the state-sponsored Confucian training center and excels in his studies. Meanwhile, their parents meet with an untimely end and Jin Yilin is left in charge of the family estate. He accepts a position in the court, befriends the crown prince and quickly establishes a place for himself in the royal court.

Jin Yi’an, who exists seemingly without prospects besides seeking new opponents to refine his Go skills, is unexpectedly summoned to serve as the etiquette attendant to the princess, and train her in the cultured and aesthetic arts that she will need after marriage to her fiancé. Without understanding how he has been appointed, he begins his service, meeting with the princess regularly to train her to play Go (Baduk 바둑 in Korean and Weiqi 围棋 in Chinese).

To everyone’s surprise, the princess’s fiancé dies suddenly while with a courtesan at the courtesan house. A wanton comment by Jin Yi’an angers the princess and she orders soldiers to kill the courtesan who was with her fiancé when he died. This sets off a rushed series of events including Jin Yilin being named as the princess’s new fiancé even as Jin Yi’an and the princess have a romantic encounter. The plot thickens even more as Jin Yi’an makes advances on the princess again,

leading to him to flee a distant temple. Meanwhile, Jin Yilin eloquently promotes pro-war policy to meet Qing incursions with force, and gains support from most of the court officials. Jin Yi'an is eventually brought back to the palace, but only to learn that his brother has been utterly crushed in battle. The story ends suddenly with Jin Yi'an rushing toward and calling out a figure he thinks is the princess. Only when the figure turns toward him does he realize it is actually the crown prince. She thus suddenly ends the story, leaving many things up in the air.

Wang Hong pinpoints that this is consistent with the manner in which Jin Renshun concludes many works suddenly without resolving many key themes in the stories. Wang points out that this approach requires the reader to decide for themselves what might have happened and reflects the unpredictability and complexity of life itself.⁶² In "Spring in the Conquered City", the reader is left contemplating the true nature of the relationships between the key characters.

Wang Hong elaborates saying:

Questions regarding the particulars of the relationship between Jin Yi'an and the princess, the relationship between Jin Yilin and the crown prince and even the relationship between the princess and the crown prince are all set up by the storyline, yet not resolved within it, thus leaving the reader to take up the task of solving it.⁶³

Jin Renshun paints this period of Joseon-Qing history with dynamic vitality and vigor. The build up to the pro-war movement within the Joseon court, spurred

⁶² Wang, Hong 王红, "Wujie de zhengjie," (master's thesis, Jilin University, 2007), 29.

⁶³ Ibid, 12.

on by Jin Yilin's efforts to unite the ministers, is portrayed as a dazzling burst of heroic effort and almost a nationalist spirit.

Jin Yi'an heard that during that time, there was a glorious light shining from the Jin residence and a veritable river of carriages and horses were lined up in front of their door. These pro-war officials all assembled in the main hall and their loud discussions were audible even outside the walls of their residence. The crown prince inevitably went to the Jin residence every evening and many officials became supporters of Jin Yilin's ideas because of the crown prince's involvement and enthusiasm at these meetings. The housekeepers said that the eyes of the officials coming to the residence shined with a bright spirit and they all talked cheerfully together. From what they said, it sounded like they were not on the brink of war, but rather an unprecedented and truly grand festival.⁶⁴

Perhaps the most earnest convert to this pro-war effort depicted in this story was the Crown Prince, who threw himself headlong into the effort spearheaded by Jin Yilin. Most interesting in this regard is the portrayal of the fate of the Crown Prince and Jin Yilin. Jin Renshun portrays them as riding off as martyrs to Kanghwa Island to defend their state from the approaching Qing armies. Historical events seem to suggest a less glorious motivation leading the crown prince to Kanghwa Island.⁶⁵ Michael J. Seth describes how Crown Prince Sohyŏn fled to Kanghwa with other royal family members not long after the Qing invasion began. It was only after the Qing captured Kanghwa Island and took members of the royal family hostage that King Injo surrendered to the Qing forces. Crown prince Sohyŏn then submitted

⁶⁴ *Spring in the Conquered City*, English translation, 40.

⁶⁵ There seems to be no historical mention of Jin Yilin and he appears to only be a fictional character.

himself as a hostage of the Qing.⁶⁶ JaHyun Kim Haboush explains the flight of the royal family:

...those who suffered most during the Manchu invasion were the members of the ruling elite. When news of the approaching Manchu army reached Korea, the royal court divided into two parties which took refuge in separate locations. The king's party went to Namhan Castle, while the crown prince's went to Kanghwa Island. Earlier, in the thirteenth century, Kanghwa Island had been a haven for resisting the invading Mongols, but the seventeenth-century Manchu army landed on it with ease.⁶⁷

Furthermore, "Spring in the Conquered City" makes no mention of King Injo's kowtow submission to Hong Taiji, the Qing ruler. This historical event represents one of the most embarrassing moments for Koreans in Korean/Qing history because the Joseon rulers had to acknowledge their inferiority to the Manchu, who Joseon had believed to be mere barbarian upstarts and not the founders of a legitimate dynasty.

Why would the author portray the crown prince and the fictional character of Jin Yilin so heroically marching into battle and downplay the humiliation of the key court figures while historical events seem to belie this perspective? An answer may be found in the author's statements about the change in the style of her writing and the use of fictional heroism.

Jin mentions how, in contrast with many of her novels about city-life that are dominated by cold realism, she often portrays ethnic Korean culture with vitality,

⁶⁶ Michael J. Seth, *A History of Korea: From Antiquity to the Present* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 149.

⁶⁷ JaHyun Kim Haboush, "Dead Bodies in the Postwar Discourse of Identity in Seventeenth-Century Korea: Subversion and Literary Production in the Private Sector," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 62, no. 2 (2003): 431.

energy and positive characteristics. This point is echoed by scholarly research, like that of Mei Lan, who concludes that Jin Renshun's style of writing can be described as remarkably cold, detached and restrained when dealing with most topics in her urban stories, but entirely different when writing about the beauty and tenacity of women in her Korean period pieces.⁶⁸ Jin Renshun herself also comments on this:

When I write about city life, I want to show the bewilderment and perplexity of the people. When I write about ethnic Korean subject matter, I focus on history and classical (culture) and touch on things of exquisite quality and legend. The women from these stories are wonderful beyond measure, beautiful, brimming over with talent and are themselves excellent story material. In these stories I do not write about their perplexity, but rather want show their admirable, praiseworthy characteristics.⁶⁹

While her comments refer particularly praising the grace, beauty and laudable characteristics of the women in her Korean period pieces, I believe that in this case she also extends that same "praising tone" to ethnic Korean culture and history in general. Just as, she "does not write about the perplexity" of the Korean women in these stories, it seems she likewise avoids highlighting the humiliation of Joseon Korea's submission to the Qing and instead "wants to show the admirable, praiseworthy characteristics" of ethnic Korean civilization despite it having come to a humiliating juncture during that period of history.

⁶⁸ Mei, Lan 梅兰, "Leng yu mei de ronghe: Lun Jin Renshun xiaoshuo de shenmei zhuiqiu" (master's thesis, Jinan University, 2013), 20.

⁶⁹ Jin, Renshun 金仁顺, interview by Deng Rubing, 71.

To accomplish this, Jin Renshun has essentially rewritten the history of the crown prince Sohyŏn and created the fictional hero of Jin Yilin for the purpose of bringing a sense of renewal and hope to this desolate age. Through such use of fictional heroism, Jin Renshun has thus garbed this conquered city in the mantle of a new spring, suggesting a new way to remember this age. Her praise itself brings “spring” to the conquered city.

Another way in which she figuratively brings spring to the conquered city is her vivid romantic symbolism expressed by means of flower fragrances. Detailed descriptions of flower fragrances and flowers themselves are diffused throughout the work. These references bring another layer of sensual reference and vitality to the relationships in the work and also contributes to her praise of “history and classical (culture) and touch on things of exquisite quality and legend”⁷⁰ in her Korean period works. It is as if she draws on every sensory appeal, including sight, smell and sound to paint a full color painting of ethnic Korean culture and the beautiful people and things therein.

Such open and romantic tribute of ethnic Korean culture in works like “Spring in the Conquered City” echoes the bold expression of ethnic identity published in Korean and Korean-Chinese literature after the Korean War and before the Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Culture Revolution. More importantly, her writing style and treatment of ancient Korean culture serves to convey a deeper understanding of Korean-Chinese to wider Chinese audiences and thus has “opened

⁷⁰ Jin, Renshun 金仁顺, interview by Deng Rubing, 71.

a window, allowing us to understand the life experiences and customs of the Korean-Chinese.”⁷¹

In her depiction of Korean-Chinese and Korean topics, Jin Renshun thus dances a fine line between glorifying unique elements of Korean culture and criticizing the outworn traditions that for centuries bore down on women in Korean society. In simple terms, she takes the best and discards the rest, selecting the most valued cultural essence and unabashedly disavowing the traditions based on male dominance. As she says, “I am a feminist when I write about Korean-Chinese (Korean) topics.”⁷² By drawing on her roots in Chinese life and literature and inspiration seeped in Korean legend and literature, she effectively merges the two into a synthesis that is unique to both Korean and Chinese literature. Her work also inherently testifies to the dynamic interweaving of the Korean and Chinese cultures and languages in the Korean-Chinese community and testifies to the roots they share with both cultures.

⁷¹ Xia, Zhenying, 18.

⁷² Jin, Renshun 金仁顺, interview by Deng Rubing, 73.

Translation of “The Entertainer”

When those in Namwŏn 남원⁷³ prefecture mention me, they always call me “Miss Chunhyang of Lady Hyang's household.” My mother, Lady Hyang, is employed in an age-old profession, relying on selling herself in order to make a living. This scandalous profession has its dangers and also some unexpected benefits.

Outside the doors of the Fragrant Pavilion, luxurious and imposing brass chariots are often parked, with golden tassels hanging down from the roofs. Those who come in the chariots all go to see Lady Hyang, and have nothing to do with me. I am eighteen years old now and have been with a man.

I showed my face in Namwŏn prefecture for the first time last year during the Dano Festival.⁷⁴ That day I was wearing a plain colored dress and a white cotton

⁷³ Kyong-Mi Danyel Kwon, "Reinventing 'Koreanness': 'The Tale of Spring Fragrance' and the Gendered Culture of Colonial Korea." (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2011), 37-48. Namwŏn (Chinese 南原 / Korean 남원) is a city in North Jeolla province (in the southwest region of the Korean peninsula) and is both the location where the original eighteen-century versions and subsequent versions of “The Tale of Chunhyang” are set and also is the place where the story originated.

⁷⁴ I-hwa Yi, *Korea's Pastimes and Customs: A Social History* (Paramus, N.J.: Homa Sekey Books, 2006), 91-93; Kyŏng-su Na and Ria Chae, *Encyclopedia of Korean Seasonal Customs* (Seoul: National Folk Museum of Korea, 2010), 160-162. The Dano festival, originally called Sirit-nal, originated out of festivities in the Mahan state in the first through third century A.D but due to the impact of Chinese civilization, eventually came to be celebrated on the 5th day of the 5th lunar month, corresponding to the Chinese Duanwu Festival. Observance included a range of superstitions intended to ward off evil forces and disease causing agents during the summer months. For example, during this holiday women washed their hair with iris extract and decorated their hair with fragrant flowers, as both were believed to protect them and repel evil forces. There were many events and games that took place, including swinging contests that were popular among women. Whoever could swing high enough to kick a small bell placed at the top the most number of times would be declared the winner. There were other activities including ancestor worship and

yarn hat that covered my face. I tried to remain calm and collected but since for years on end I had bathed in flower essence water, the fragrance of flowers seeped out from my body, causing butterflies to circle around me, making me look quite dubious. At my side was my maid Hyang Dan⁷⁵ whose delicate beauty attracted the gaze of many men. She was pleased with herself on account of this and persuaded me to go for a swing.

As I swung, Hyang Dan pushed the swing from below, making it rise higher and higher until the butterflies that had accompanied me lagged behind and flew away. While in flight I caught sight of the towering "Chang Cheng"⁷⁶, two exaggerated and distorted sculptures made from brightly painted wood, one of a man and one of a woman at the northern foot of the mountain. It is said that if a young person writes the name of their sweetheart on a piece of fabric and ties it to

wrestling (for men) and other ceremonies that varied from region to region. The description in this text involving Chunhyang swinging in the first part of this text, as well as her fragranced hair and body both correspond to the practices associated with the Dano Festival during the Joseon dynasty.

⁷⁵ Kim, Chin-yŏng, Yu-sŏk Sŏ and Chi-yun Pak, *Ch'unhyang Chŏn kwa Han'guk Munhwa* (춘향전 과 한국문화) [Chunxiang and Korean Culture] (Seoul: Pagijŏng Press, 1999), 29; Xu Shixu (許世旭), *Chunxiang Zhuan* (春香傳) [The Tale of Chunhyang] (Taipei: Taiwan Shang Wu Yin Shu Guan 臺灣商務印書館, 1967), 67. Jin Renshun uses the characters 香单 for the name of Chunhyang's maid Hyang Dan, however, all references to the maid's name from Korean and Chinese sources indicate that her name in original texts was 香丹. It is unknown whether there was simply an error in transcription or printing, or if Jin Renshun had some other intent by using the characters 香单.

⁷⁶ Chun-sik Ch'oe, *Folk Religion: The Customs in Korea* (Seoul: Ewha Womans University Press, 2006), 115-121. Jangseung (Chinese 长承/ Korean 장승) are totem like posts typically made from wood or stone and which were carved with exaggerated faces and expressions. Typically the statues were placed at the entrances to villages and temples where they indicated the location of borders and also served as signposts between towns. Another primary function was to also serve as guardians to protect the villages where they were placed from evil influences and to guard travelers departing from the town. Jangseung are usually found in pairs of both male and female statues.

the sculptures, they will fall in love. As I flew higher, I saw more buildings and forested land, all nestled in their own places. I started to get dizzy, but Hyang Dan showed no intention of stopping. Finally, my toe hit the golden bell marking the highest point of the swing. By the time the sound of the crowd cheering below reached my ears, it had been almost completely muffled by the wind. I was truly frightened, not simply because of the height I was swinging, but also because I realized that Hyang Dan was trying to kill me. Ten years earlier, when the Fragrant Pavilion acquired her, she had been unimaginably ugly, but now she firmly believed that if I was out of the picture, she could become the most beautiful woman in the whole city. The end of this adventure came as a result of my straw hat, which the wind swept way from my head and floated all the way to the ground just in front of Hyang Dan's feet, at which point she stopped pushing the swing.

The swing slowed down and I returned once again to the ground. Unable to stand on my legs, I sat down in the swing. The area around the swing was packed with people, staring at me. They were curious about my face but all of the attention annoyed me. Hyang Dan picked up my hat and gave it to me. I noticed that the fringe was dirty and I threw it away. Once I could walk again, I squeezed my way through the crowd. Behind me, I could hear the people going on and on about, "Ms. Chunhyang from Lady Hyang's household."

My mother once was the most beautiful woman in Namwŏn prefecture. When she was sixteen she gave up her body to an envoy of Namwŏn and became pregnant. If she had given birth to a boy, perhaps she would have become his concubine, but she gave birth to me. I was the reason that she was refused entrance into the home

of the governor. It was in this manner that my mother became Lady Hyang, whose fame later grew to be much greater than that envoy. Yet her feelings for the envoy, a man she had originally held in such high esteem, were easily erased by the arrival of many high officials and nobles at her door. Apart from symbolizing the price a woman always has to pay in order to make progress, he meant nothing to her.

Once I became an adult, Lady Hyang's daily schedule was flipped upside down. Even before the lamps were lit she was still in bed, her skin was as smooth as silk and her face as bright as moonlight. Previously on two occasions in the evening, I stood in the flower garden peeping at her through the window of the enclosure. In the evening, Lady Hyang only wore light colored short clothing with a long skirt, with her hair rolled into a bun at the back of her head, and was otherwise unadorned with the exception of a silver hairpin inlaid with a pearl. Those two nights there were no men who came to see her, and at her side sat her favorite entertainer, playing the kayagŭm.⁷⁷

I gazed at Lady Hyang, my eyes like wells filled with water. She had given light filled days to me and left the night to herself and yet could still be so calm and undisturbed. I was so happy that I was her daughter and not her mother.

This spring a handsome yet shy young shoemaker named Choi-eun was called to the Fragrant Pavilion and I fell in love with him at first sight. He, however, barely

⁷⁷ Keith L. Pratt, *Everlasting Flower: A History of Korea* (London: Reaktion, 2006), 37, 52. The kayagŭm (Chinese 伽倻琴 / Korean 가야금) is a 12-stringed zither and is the unofficial national instrument of Korea. Kayagŭm literally means 'zither of Kaya', a confederacy of territories in the south eastern part of the Korean peninsula, that existed prior to being absorbed into the Silla dynasty in the mid 6th century.

even looked me in the face. As he was measuring my feet, he used his palm to support the soles of my feet and our skin touched and I noticed his palm was the same size as my sole. I kept gazing at him, hoping that he would raise his head and look at me, for with one glance I could convey to him my inner thoughts. But Choi-eun did not raise his head and placed my foot back in my shoe.

After I stepped out of his shop, I stood in the brilliant light of the sun, my heart desolate. Hyang Dan sat down in the same chair that I was just sitting in and extended her foot to Choi-eun's bosom. At night she even went to his house.

I couldn't sleep and my stomach was empty and I went to the kitchen to find something to eat. I ate a bowl of cold noodles, a dish of cake, vinegar sashimi, and other pastries and I couldn't stop eating all the way till the morning, yet couldn't manage to stuff myself to death.

Hyang Dan's face was glowing as she cleaned the room and at the same time gave me an account of what happened with Choi-eun, and she ended by saying, "When all is said, the fact remains that he is nothing but a lowly craftsman." Hearing this, I dropped an ordinary porcelain teacup, which Hyang Dan cut her hand on while she was cleaning up the mess.

During the Dano Festival I met Lee Mong-ryong. I wore a new pair of shoes. When Choi-eun used a cow horn to carve the soles of my new shoes, he had intended to just raise the heels but he also sculpted a hibiscus flower with extreme care. Later the best embroiderer in the city embroidered a white hibiscus flower on light pink silk on them. I walked the streets with Hyang Dan, who was very unhappy about the engraving Choi-eun had made on the soles of my shoes. She longed for a

pair of shoes even more beautiful than mine, but her wishes were not fulfilled. The day before, Choi-eun left the Fragrant Pavilion with his work completed and the love affair between him and Hyang Dan was also over.

I walked with Hyang Dan to the side of an old temple where we heard the sound of horses' hooves behind us. I pulled Hyang Dan into the old temple to hide and in that hasty and hurried moment one of my shoes fell off in the street. The shoe was lying in Lee Mong-ryong's path. First he circled around the shoe twice on horseback and then dis-mounted and took my shoe in his hand, turning it over and admiring it longingly as if he had a fetish. Then he raised his head looking towards the old temple.

"May I ask where is the young lady dropped this shoe?" Lee Mong-ryong asked as he looked at the old temple, his face reflecting the varied experiences of life and yet a certain innocence at the same time.

I sent Hyang Dan to retrieve my shoe. Blushing, Hyang Dan walked up to him and asked for it. Lee Mong-ryong stared at Hyang Dan's face and then suddenly bent down and lifted her skirt. Hyang Dan let out a shriek.

"You have both of your shoes on. This isn't your shoe." Lee Mong-ryong said proudly. "Have your lady come and claim it for herself." He said.

I was touched by the way Lee Mong-ryong lifted her skirt and I stepped out from inside the run-down temple. As soon as I stepped out, his gaze was fixed on me, his body and his hands were motionless, and I had no trouble snatching the shoes from his hands and placing them back on my feet. I set off towards the Fragrant Pavilion knowing that I wouldn't need to go to the swing this year for there already

was a man who was in love with me.

Lee Mong-ryong went to the Fragrant Pavilion that very night, but went to Lady Hyang's pavilion by mistake. Lady Hyang had already arranged for a maid to be there waiting for him to guide him, so that he could find my residence without any problem. Lee Mong-ryong and I had skipped a few steps in the Confucian matchmaking process, such as asking each other's names and the other formalities of Confucian matchmaking, yet that very night he stayed with me.

Lee Mong-ryong walked all around my room, tapping the porcelain bottles and touching the corners of my wardrobe that were made of thin cow horn. His eyes brightened when he saw the pure gold hinge on my wardrobe door. Finally, he paid attention to me, but by that time, my romantic sentiment was long gone.

Lee Mong-ryong approached me, trying to peel back my clothing with his hand. I took out a small knife and pushed it close to his stomach. He laughed, not caring in the slightest.

"There have been many young ladies and a few princesses who have played this game with me, which is hilarious since women cannot hope to successfully use a knife to protect themselves from a man's advances," he said.

He grabbed the knife out of my hands and drew the blade out, pulling his finger across the knife blade, and after a moment, a red line appeared on his finger, the blood flowing out quickly. I wrapped his hand in my white silk handkerchief that I had prepared for myself.

Lee Mong-ryong changed me into a true woman, and at that moment the silhouette of Lady Hyang floated through my mind. I finally had walked a path like

that of Lady Hyang and it was exciting without end. In the days when love is lost, we don't become just one man's woman, but rather become the woman dreamed of by many men. This type of good fortune is not one encountered by every woman, just as we do not have the final say in our appearance.

From the start of Dano festival, Lee Mong-ryong stayed over a month in the Fragrant Pavilion. Then one day a letter in the handwriting of Lee Mong-ryong's father, the prince, arrived from the capital. The prince first scolded him without end for wasting his time with trivial exploits, and urged him to go to Seoul to take the state examination.

In his letter, Lee Mong-ryong's father exhorted his son, writing, "Even though a young man may live his years in vain if he doesn't have love affairs, he cannot neglect his proper business because of such romance." He probably didn't expect that his son would let me read the letter, for he also wrote, "I heard that Miss Chunhyang in Lady Hyang's household is a woman of peerless beauty and elegance. If these rumors are true, then your luck is not bad!"

Lee Mong-ryong was beside himself. "What more glorious event is there in world than to be envied by your father! What do you think?" He asked.

Looking bashful, I replied lightly, "Of course there is nothing more glorious than that."

On the day that Lee Mong-ryong departed the sun was shining brightly in the sky and there was blue all around. I tidily wrapped my hair into a bun and saw off the first man I had ever been with. Lee Mong-ryong represented a milestone in my

life that I had always yearned for, and passing this milestone gave me an inkling of the first signs of true happiness.

Lee Mong-ryong hesitated, obviously sick at heart, fearing that another man would take his place together with me. He knew what I wanted to do. "Chunhyang, I will return as soon as possible," he said over and over again.

While Lee Mong-ryong's words were sincere, I knew that as soon as he turned to leave, he would forget me. With her maids accompanying her, Lady Hyang also came out to see Lee Mong-ryong off. In over three years this was the first time I had seen her step out in the sun and indeed her face was as white as day while her clothing was as black as the night. Lee Mong-ryong was also subdued by her presence and said nothing.

Lady Hyang sized up Lee Mong-ryong and softly yet resolutely said, "Miss Chunhyang will wait for you to win top marks on the state examination and then select an auspicious date for marriage."

Lee Mong-ryong stared blankly at her for a moment, bowed deeply to her and then climbed into the chariot. While Lady Hyang and I were seeing him off, I muttered to myself, "I will not marry him."

"Women have to get married." Lady Hyang said and then turned and walked to her residence. I called out to her saying, "Lady Hyang....."

She stopped but didn't turn toward me. From behind she was as slim and graceful as a young woman. I was incapable of calling this type of woman mother.

"I am very grateful that you raised me all those years ago. From this day forward I want you to take it easy. I intend to take care of you using the same means

that you raised me." I said.

Lady Hyang turned around and looked at me with gleaming eyes and an expression that was like a smile and yet not a smile.

"You want to live my life? You are far from being able to do this." She said.

"I already am a real woman." Chunhyang replied.

"That is entirely superficial and is far removed from the real truth of life."

Lady Hyang replied contemptuously.

I had believed that seeing off Lee Mong-ryong would open the great gate of happiness, but now Lady Hyang was playing the role of a sentry guarding the gate.

"But I want to experience a new life." I said.

"I am actually not opposed to that." Lady Hyang replied as she turned and left abruptly, leaving me alone under the shining sun.

I waited for a new man to walk into my life, but it was over two months until someone came by. He had just arrived in town, taking up the post of governor.

The governor was tidy and polite on his first visit, saying he had come to this place on account of its reputation. This man stinks, I thought to myself. When the governor approached me, I avoided him. Although all along I had yearned to be with a man besides Lee Mong-ryong, a man with body odor was absolutely not under consideration.

"I am sorry, I cannot accept your advances." I said.

The governor was surprised and asked me why I refused him, to which I could only reply, "I am in love with the son of an official, Lee Mong-ryong."

The envoy departed but left twenty officers around my residence, placing me

under house arrest, saying, "When you forget about Lee Mong-ryong, I will set you free."

In the evening, Lady Hyang secretly came to see me as she wanted to know the reason that I had refused the envoy. I told her the truth of the matter and she smiled and said thoughtfully, "So that's why."

I didn't let the house arrest imposed by the envoy bother me, and besides I typically never left the Fragrant Pavilion anyway. Life became more vivid having twenty men surrounding me. When I was unoccupied I happened to hear Hyang Dan and the soldiers flirting playfully with each other. Occasionally the envoy would send someone bearing a gift, asking in passing for me to send a spoken message. Each time I would accept the gift and then refuse to send a reply.

Lady Hyang bribed the best roaming performers in Namwŏn to compose a heart-rending poem that credited me as its author.

The beautiful Gisaeng is as gorgeous and sensual as before, the silk-like fragrant grass is to this day full of life. After her love left he sent no word, her handkerchief was filled with tears.

The deeply moving story of Miss Fragrant Spring's great love for Lee Mong-ryong touched the hearts of countless people and the story was passed on all the way to Seoul. Lee Mong-ryong passed the state examination and was appointed as the imperial censor. He was engaged to marry a young lady in the household of another prince, but when she heard of my story and learned about the relationship that Lee Mong-ryong and I had, she decided not to marry him saying, "It doesn't really matter what happened, but as a member of the prince's family, it is

unacceptable for me to lose face by marrying you."

Lee Mong-ryong expressed his understanding. The young lady looked serious. She had a round face like a full moon and had a loose reputation that was well known among the sons of the aristocrats. He worried that there was no way to be freed from this situation. The prince had also heard my story, called his son to his study and spent a great deal of time taking measure of the situation before finally responding.

"You don't look like me at all. On what basis would Chunhyang reject the courtship of a governor for you? It is truly unfathomable." He said.

"To tell the truth, it is a mystery to me as well," Lee Mong-ryong said.

"The Emperor also knows of your romantic exploits and it seems that the only option available to you is to marry her," the prince sighed.

Lee Mong-ryong disguised himself as a beggar and returned to the Fragrant Pavilion. First he met Lady Hyang, who led him through a small gate in order to avoid being spotted by the officers, all the way to my residence.

Lee Mong-ryong played the part of a beggar well, talking of failing the state examination, the decline of his family, and his loss of face. Lady Hyang and I saw through his cover, for his face was still fair and his fingernails immaculate, and from the undergarment beneath his beggar's clothes seeped the faint smell of quality perfume. While he gave an account of his miserable state, I had to cover half of my face as I was laughing almost to the point of crying.

"Chunhyang, to my surprise you are having such a hard time." Lee Mong-ryong said, ceasing his rambling narrative.

Lady Hyang sighed with sorrow, saying, "The affairs of life are unpredictable." She ruthlessly stared at me from behind him. I sat upright and said to him in a quiet voice, "I do not aspire to great wealth or lofty status, for I am yours in life and death."

Lee Mong-ryong's expression became stiff and rigid, just like the first time I saw him on the official path. When he left the Fragrant Pavilion he went through the main gate where he was arrested by the officers and tied up and taken to the official seat of the governor.

The governor was depressed and drunk in his sorrows and asked Lee Mong-ryong who he was.

"I am the very one that Chunhyang fell in love with." Lee Mong-ryong replied.

The envoy stared at him with surprise, taking just as long as the prince had taken to size him up.

"How could Chunhyang fall in love with you?" He finally asked.

"I also want to know why." Lee Mong-ryong replied. The governor called on one of the officers serving him to beat Lee Mong-ryong in the face.

In a timely fashion Lee Mong-ryong exposed his true identity by taking out his official seal to show to the envoy. Once the envoy saw the seal he nodded his head and said, "No wonder Chunhyang has fallen in love with you, it turns out that you are the imperial censor." The envoy offered his own seat to Lee Mong-ryong and stepped to the side.

Lee Mong-ryong sat down and ordered them to beat the governor's face, then he called the envoy next to him and asked him in a deeply worried tone, "Do you

think that a woman's love is reliable?" In response, the envoy spat out two of his teeth that had been knocked out.

Lee Mong-ryong and I had a huge and expensive wedding that was extravagant on the scale of an imperial wedding and which was the most celebrated wedding in the Lee clan history. Lady Hyang's smile was lovely amidst the rich, multicolored decorations, while my heart was abnormally desolate. I knew that by becoming an exemplary chaste woman and martyr for the honor of my husband I would forever lose the opportunity to live a life of happiness like Lady Hyang.

Translation of “Spring in the Conquered City”⁷⁸

1

When Jin Yi’an arrived at the White Pear Palace, there already were two palace maids waiting for him. They led him through the courtyard and followed along the veranda and then stopped in front of a door leading into a room. Jin Yi’an also stopped with them. Four other palace maids who were standing outside the room had seen them approaching and pulled the door open, bowing deeply in greeting with their hands crossed in front of their body as they said, “The princess is waiting for you.”

Jin Yi’an also nodded slightly and entered the room.

The room was brightly lit and Princess Chunmei was sitting by herself in front of a table next to the window, watching him come in.

“I am the new etiquette attendant.” Jin Yi’an said, noticing the hoarseness of his voice that sounded like he had choked on pipe tobacco smoke.

⁷⁸ Du Fu (杜甫), “Chunwang” (春望) [A View in Spring], in *Dufu Shixuanzhu* (杜甫诗选注) [Selected Works of Du Fu], ed. Wu Kangshun (吴康舜) (Shanghai (上海): Shanghai Yuandong Chubanshe (上海远东出版社) [Shanghai Far East Publishing House], 2008), 33-34. The title of the story is the second line in a well-known poem by the Tang poet Du Fu in which the author describes his sorrow at seeing Chang’an occupied by enemy forces. While the line in question, also the title of this story by Jin Renshun, if viewed in isolation only describes the dynamic return of spring to a city, the translation of the title cannot be separated from the broader meaning of the poem describing a the sentiment evoked by a beloved city having been conquered by enemy forces.

This was the first time for Jin Yi'an to meet the princess, who was the queen's flesh and blood. It was said that the previous etiquette attendant resigned and returned to his hometown because of the incessant hardship and torment he suffered at her hands. That Jin Yi'an had been chosen for the vacancy without having taken the state examination was a novel happening in the bureaucracy.

"Aren't you the brother of Jin Yilin?" Princess Chunmei asked him.

"Yes." He replied.

"You truly resemble your brother," Princess Chunmei said with wonder, as she carefully looked him over before saying, "however it is only a superficial resemblance, as your manner and bearing are completely different."

Her natural and relaxed manner when interacting with men was very surprising. She was unlike a typical cloistered princess and was also different from the courtesans of the brothels who have eyes like hooks, and use their eyes to communicate, especially when the import of the conversation deepens, throwing the thoughts and emotions of men into a spin in only a few glances. Princess Chunmei had a direct gaze, showing she was not at all shy, as if others also had no justification to be shy.

Jin Yi'an set up the Go board on the table between them, preparing to teach her to play Go.

"Your older brother is arrogant and is secretly admired by many women. I have often wondered, is it because he is admired by women that he has become arrogant or is it because he is arrogant that he has come to be admired by women?"

The princess asked without giving Jin Yi'an the chance to reply, as she casually

grabbed a Go piece in passing and placed it on the board. She then said, "Anyway, even the imperial concubine of the crown prince has feelings for him. Have you ever seen her?"

He shook his head and also picked up a piece and placed it on the board.

"Everyone says that she is the most beautiful woman in the world, just like the empress when she was young. Even the crown prince, who had never even looked at a woman straight in the face sighed when he saw her, saying that he never imagined there could actually be a beauty like her." Princess Chunmei seemed to feel sorry on Jin Yi'an's behalf that he had never laid eyes upon her. The princess looked at him with sympathy and smiled with an unreadable smile, saying, "The imperial concubine admired your brother, and after he entered the palace she became stranger and stranger. The crown prince not only didn't blame him, on the contrary he came to be the closest of friends with Jin Yilin. You must have heard people say how the crown prince is the laughing stock of all of Seoul. And now, you, the brother of Jin Yilin, have become the etiquette attendant. How did you assume this position?"

Jin Yi'an gazed downward examining the Go board.

"Didn't I just ask you a question?" The princess asked, raising the tone of her voice slightly.

"Other than having been appointed by the Ministry of Rites, I don't know."

He replied.

"Of course you don't know." The princess placed her piece on the board very quickly, playing even faster than Jin Yi'an. "You have reaped where you have not

sown, and although you are fully aware of this, you pretend not to understand." She said.

"If you are unsatisfied with me, you could replace me with someone else." Jin Yi'an replied sitting upright and still, raising his eyes to look directly at Princess Chunmei for the first time.

It was evident that Princess Chunmei did not anticipate that Jin Yi'an would speak his mind so directly and she stared at him and in a daze, the black and white of her eyes reflecting her innocence.

Jin Yi'an's anger subsided and died out after a moment.

"Now you seem much more like Jin Yilin." The princess said, smiling while she indicated that it was his turn to play. "It would be unnecessary to find someone else. The previous attendant had body odor and I became disoriented just being in the same room with him. You don't smell bad and you also look like Jin Yilin, and who knows, he may even come here looking for you." She said.

Princess Chunmei's directness surprised Jin Yilin, especially since she was on the verge of marrying the eldest son of the prime minister in grand style. It was for that very reason that that he had been appointed to teach her the etiquette of the wedding ceremony as well as skills such as playing Go and preparing and serving tea in order to make their marriage life more enjoyable. Jin Yi'an didn't know whether the princess was as straightforward with the previous attendant as she was with him. Perhaps she dared to be so direct with him because he was the brother of Jin Yilin.

Did she want him to pass a message to Jin Yilin?

"What do you think? Is it possible that Jin Yilin could come here looking for you?" The princess asked.

"I don't think so." He replied.

"What if I invited him?" She asked.

"You are an unmarried princess preparing for your wedding, doing that would be a bit lacking in propriety." Jin Yi'an replied bluntly.

"Are you saying that as soon as a woman gets married she can do whatever she pleases?" The princess replied almost instantly, smiling mischievously.

But Jin Yi'an was no longer looking at her. He was grasping a Go piece looking for a place to play, and was greatly surprised to find that Princess Chunmei had, with little effort, played an exquisite opening.

"Do you know that guy?" The princess asked.

"What..." Jin Yi'an looked up and glanced at her.

"The man I am going to marry. Have you ever met him?"

"No I haven't." He replied.

"Last month when the prime minister came to the palace to request my hand in marriage to his son, I actually had the honor of looking at him from behind a screen. It seemed like that guy hadn't slept for half a month, his eyes were as swollen as mushy apricots, he was as skinny as a propped up clothing rack and when he yawned he didn't even use his sleeves to cover his mouth." The princess spoke and at the same time fished out a Go piece from the container. Her fingers moved as if she were picking candies out of a candy box, the pieces striking the

board with a cracking sound as she quickly put them on the board, almost without pausing.

"Tell me about something interesting event that has happened. It is very lonely staying in the palace and everyone inevitably forms the habit of gossiping."

Jin Yi'an thought for a long time and then said, "This morning when I was coming here, the carriage was blocked by a lunatic who said that the carriage was made of gold and as if his life depended on it attempted to break off a piece for himself."

Princess Chunmei laughed and asked, "Did that really happen?"

"Yes." Jin Yi'an replied and bowed his head to analyze the situation on the Go board. "Seeing how your exquisite Go skills are I believe you do not need anyone to teach you!"

The princess looked down at the board asking, "Did I win?"

"Actually, no." Jin Yi'an replied.

"Then why are you praising my 'impeccable' Go skills?" The princess asked.

"In my opinion, there are probably only be a dozen or so people from the Sŏnggyun'gwan Academy⁷⁹ who could defeat you." He said.

"If that is the case, doesn't that make you the best in the world!?" Princess Chunmei asked sarcastically. "Are you trying to curry favor with me or covertly praise yourself?"

⁷⁹ Michael J. Seth, *A History of Korea: From Antiquity to the Present* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 122. The Sŏnggyun'gwan (成均館 in Chinese, 성균관 in Korean) was the National Confucian Academy founded in the late Koryŏ dynasty and which remained a training center through the Joseon dynasty. Students were trained in the fundamentals of Confucian principles to be applied to ordering government and society and were typically employed as officials serving the king.

When Jin Yi'an left, he walked past the White Pear Palace gate and looked back at the palace roof that resembled a bird's wings extended out, hiding the veranda adjacent to the room in shadows. Princess Chunmei stood on the veranda looking out towards him, her expression not clearly visible, yet the silhouette of her white-garbed form was striking.

She resembles a white Go piece. Jin Yi'an thought to himself as he turned his head back, flower petals from a hibiscus tree at the entrance to the palace floating downward gently in the evening breeze and covering his head, face, and the front piece of his jacket. The petals surrounded him so suddenly that his heart fluttered wildly as if he had become a black Go piece encircled by innumerable white pieces.

2

On the day that the crown prince came to drink tea, it started raining in the early morning in a fine drizzle that it seemed, supposing one had miraculously skilled hands, could have been used to weave a silken fabric. Jin Yi'an recalled Princess Chunmei's fingertips and after a moment his train of thought shifted from them to the tips of the bamboo leaves. The courtyard had a section of bitter bamboo, the leaves of which were fresh and green to begin with but since they were wet, they took on an even more lively jade green color that was almost frightful.

Books were spread out in front of Jin Yi'an but he hadn't turned a single page, for the only thing that occupied his mind was Princess Chunmei. Her black lacquer pupils lingered within him, staring at him without blinking. These thoughts left him flustered and confused.

"What is the White Pear Palace like?" asked Jin Yilin, back from the palace.
"Princess Chunmei's crafty and headstrong ways are well known." He continued.

"Not bad," Jin Yi'an replied laughing, thought for a moment and then saying,
"her Go skills are exquisite."

"Is that so?" Jin Yilin asked while using slender silver chopsticks to pick at the mackerel. Every time he ate fish, he always arranged the fish head, bones and tail on his plate in a neat and tidy fashion as if the plate had been served to him that way.

"Once, at the prince's residence, I saw Princess Chunmei speaking ill of the crown prince's imperial concubine as if she was jealous of her beauty." Jin Yilin said to Jin Yi'an as he put his plate of fish bones off to the side.

"She is about to get married and yet she acts like a child." He continued.

"She is great at Go though." Jin Yi'an said.

Jin Yilin looked at him coarsely for a moment as if some very unpleasant comment had bubbled up within him, which, after a moment's hesitation, he held back and kept to himself. Jin Yilin disapproved of the four classical arts of playing the zither, Go, calligraphy and painting and similar amusements. On several occasions he had scolded Jin Yi'an, telling him that his willpower would only be sapped and dissipated by engaging in such trifling amusements.

Jin Yi'an tactfully closed his eyes and thought to himself; if it wasn't for his outstanding Go skills, it wouldn't have been so easy to be promoted to the position of etiquette attendant.

Since it was a rainy day, dusk came quickly and the light rain that had fallen all day suddenly turned to steady rain, the raindrops striking the bamboo leaves with a clear and distinct sound. The servants lit the lanterns hanging in the veranda.

The lanterns swayed gently in the wind.

From the enveloping darkness of the East Courtyard came the sound of footsteps. The servant carried the lantern in the front and Jin Yi'an could recognize Jin Yilin's silhouette, but he could not guess who the third person in the middle was.

"We suddenly were in the mood for some tea and so we came over," Jin Yilin said. He had moisture clinging to his clothing as they approached followed the veranda, heading straight toward Jin Yi'an, "we aren't interrupting you, are we?"

"Of course not. There just happens to be a new batch of lotus flower scented tea." Jin Yi'an replied.

The person following behind Jin Yilin took off the cloak covering his head. His facial features were bathed in the light of the lantern revealing a fresh and clean smile, the sight of which almost caused Jin Yi'an's heart to stop.

"Why haven't you greeted the crown prince?" Jin Yilin asked.

Jin Yi'an finally came to his senses, stepped back a half-pace and kneeled down in front of the crown prince.

"That is not necessary." The crown prince said as he held out his hand to help Jin Yi'an up. His voice was very similar to Princess Chunmei's, but the tone was

graver and he spoke much more slowly, as if he was thinking intently about each phrase he uttered. "I hope you do not take offense at our arrival at this late hour."

The crown prince said.

"Not at all." Jin Yi'an bowed in greeting and then invited them into the study. The stove had been on throughout the day and the room was warm and comfortable. "This lowly room has been brightened by your arrival." Jin Yi'an commented.

Jin Yi'an's heart beat quickly and his hands were shaking slightly, but by the time he had arranged the tea table, washed his hands, boiled the water and started to rinse the tea utensils he had calmed down and moved unhurriedly. He had only seen the crown prince once during a royal assembly where he saw the prince sitting in an elevated spot looking down at the civil and military officials. Jin Yi'an thought to himself that nobility was evident in the rarely encountered, nearly emotionless and porcelain like face of the crown prince.

The crown prince and Jin Yilin struck up a conversation and the crown prince was greatly surprised by Jin Yi'an's elegant and skilled tea preparation.

"Everyone knows only of your superior Go skills Jin Yi'an, but even as your older brother, I am not sure exactly how many talents and skills you have hidden away." Jin Yilin sat next to the crown prince on a decorated seat, smiling faintly as he looked at his younger brother.

The lotus scented tea that Jin Yi'an had prepared was from a crop just harvested that year in the Bo-seong district⁸⁰ and which had been sealed in tea bags

⁸⁰ Park, Nam Joon. "The Joy of Growing Tea." *Koreana: A Quarterly on Korean Culture and Arts* 27 (1) 2013. The Bo-seong district (Chinese 宝城, Korean 보성), now a

and tied together with freshly picked lotus petals from the pool behind the mansion. Once the tea had fully absorbed the fragrance of the lotus petals, the tea bags had been taken out. Every year, Jin Yi'an had Jin Yilin over to try the new batch of scented tea but he never imagined that this time the crown prince would also come along!

Indeed, it was new tea with fresh petals. As soon as the water was poured into the tea bowls, the sweet fragrance was like the smell of countless blooming lotus flowers flowing into the room, thoroughly invigorating their spirits and minds. The crown prince and Jin Yilin appeared more composed and dignified and Jin Yi'an briefly introduced how the tea was made and then set out a tea bowl in front of each of them.

"Living in the imperial palace has made me so ignorant, I didn't know that a tea as fine as this existed in the world!" The crown prince exclaimed in amazement after taking a sip of tea.

"The tea is good and the water used to brew it is unique as well. Yi'an collected it from the dew of lotus leaves before sunrise." Jin Yilin added.

"It is your tongue that is good," Jin Yi'an said, "the tea is on your tongue and the water is on your tongue."

The crown prince's gaze swept across from the rim of the tea bowl and rested on Jin Yi'an for a moment.

county in South Jeolla Province has long been one of the leading producers of green tea in Korea.

At first glance the Jin brothers originally looked completely identical, but because of the differences in their personalities, they left sharply differing impressions on those they met; one burned splendidly like gold while the other was graceful and obedient as silver.

After they finished their tea, Jin Yi'an filled up their cups again.

"Supposing I were to shamelessly acknowledge that my brother and I have some measure of talent and capacity, I would say I am like that tea fragrance that filled the air when the water was poured into the tea, instantaneously filling the room with overflowing fragrance." Jin Yilin raised the engraved Deok-neong⁸¹ celadon tea bowl in his hand to show to the Crown prince. "Yi'an's talent and capacity, however, is like this tea bowl which after having one cup is unimpressive but after the second and third cups, begins to exude a jade-like luster."

Jin Yi'an raised his head and looked at Jin Yilin, utterly shocked by Jin Yilin's comment. His impression of Jin Yilin was that he was engrossed in making constant progress, always moving toward some distant place and wholly disdaining the trivial matters around him. When their parents were still alive, on the few occasions when the whole family chatted about domestic trivia, even these conversations centered on how to raise the social standing of the Jin family. At such times, Jin Yi'an

⁸¹ National Museum of Korea. "Deok-neong Celadon Engraved with Decorative Designs." <http://211.252.141.1/program/chi/chiRelicDetail.jsp?menuID=003003002&relicID=1481&relicDetailID=5924&searchSelect=A.RELICKOR&back=chiRelicSearchList¤tPage=117> Accessed October, 24, 2013. Deok-neong district (Chinese 德宁府, Korean 덕녕부) was a district office that oversaw the production ceramics produced from 1455-1457. Since it existed for such a short time, works bearing the Deok-neong seal are particularly rare.

sat and listened with indifference to their enthusiastic discussions and high aspirations. He was incapable of joining the ambiance the three of them had created.

He wasn't sure when and in what frame of mind Jin Yilin had started understanding his younger brother. He was truly astonished by this type of comment.

He then realized that the tea bowls were celadons with decorative designs with the engraving, "Deok-neong"!

"It is a true pleasure having tea with Yi'an and wine with Yilin." The crown prince sighed softly.

4

When Jin Yi'an was six years old he started to study at the eastern hall. On the first day of classes, Jin Yilin, who had started taking classes there two years before Yi'an, was called on by the teacher to stand and recite a passage of the *Analects* from memory. At eight years old, Jin Yilin already had boundless energy as if he was a rapidly spinning top and the old age Chinese quotations rolled off his lips as lively and moving chants. Jin Yilin was possessed of such brilliance that Jin Yi'an had felt it would be impossible for him to ever follow in his footsteps.

From that time on, Jin Yi'an disliked anything that Jin Yilin liked. He completely bungled his study of the Chinese classics, not because he didn't study hard, but because he instinctively avoided any talk of politics and bringing peace and order to the land. When it came to the leisurely pursuits of painting, calligraphy, Go, zither and the like, however, Jin Yi'an was entirely in his element and became

renowned for his skills in such arts with little effort. Fortunately for him, their parents had invested all of their hope in the elder son and thus were relatively forgiving of Jin Yi'an's lack of aspiration.

After their parents passed away, Jin Yilin was so engrossed in his studies and martial arts training at the Sönggyun'gwan that he only returned home once every ten days or so.

Meanwhile, Jin Yi'an spent his days at home composing poems, painting, playing Go and drinking tea while at night he went to the courtesan house to seek out pleasure with the ladies. One dancer in the "Flowerless" pavilion captivated and infatuated the heart of Jin Yi'an. It was as if her body had been taken in the hands of the heavenly lord and been wrung out, making her waist soft and supple.

One day, Jin Yi'an spent the night in the "Flowerless" pavilion and returned home in the early morning only to find Jin Yilin sitting in his study. In front of him there was a copper basin typically used in winter to burn charcoal for warmth and in the basin were tongs with an engraved wooden handle. Jin Yilin's complexion appeared metallic in tone and texture and his look made Yi'an think of the creaking sound that typically came from his bones when he practiced martial arts.

Jin Yi'an saw that a bundle of scrolls and paintings had been moved from his wardrobe to Jin Yilin's side.

They spent the whole morning together in the study. The light of red and blue flames flickered on the paintings in a manner that was equally enchanting as the dancers on the paintings. The accumulation of ash in the copper basins rose

higher and higher until finally it flowed over the edge of the basin and like dried leaves floated down onto the patterned woven mats.

Jin Yi'an felt like his mind had also been taken hold by tongs and held in the flame until it turned to dust. He sat motionless with his legs curled up until his feet, followed by his legs, his body, his arms and finally even his head became numb.

"Our parents are in the nether world and this is how you bring comfort to their departed spirits?" Jin Yilin asked brusquely as he finished burning the paintings and turned and left abruptly.

5

He didn't know how Jin Yilin knew what he had done. It was hardly a rare sight for the young men of Sönggyun'gwan be seen going to and returning from the courtesan house, for it is said that a young man will come to regret a life without love affairs and romances. In fact, those who had never gone to the courtesan house were the ones who were derided and ridiculed. Jin Yi'an gradually calmed down yet he still regarded Jin Yilin's actions as a gross over-reaction. He should be happy with the way things were and let nature take its course. They had completely different objectives. Jin Yilin was occupied with making a name for himself while Jin Yian spent his time enchanted with women. The way Jin Yilin made a big deal about such a small problem showed that it could only be his older brother's attempt to play the part of a powerful father figure in front of his younger brother.

Was he consoling the departed spirit of their father? He thought to himself.

If so, what did that have to do with him?

When their parents were alive, their father kept one eye on the wine jar and one eye on Jin Yilin, while their mother kept one eye on their father and one eye on Jin Yilin. There was no need to suggest that they had forgotten about Jin Yi'an after their death for they had already long since forgotten him when they were alive. Jin Yi'an was deeply sorrowed by the death of his parents, but not to the point of desperation as he hardly ever experienced "intense" emotions at all.

At the funeral, he wore mourning garments and was calm and sullen as he stood behind his brother who was greeting the guests and responding to friends and family. As he was unoccupied, Jin Yi'an had the chance to look at his brother with a detached eye and it seemed to him that he was happier than he should have been given the occasion. Now, Jin Yilin, with his excessive concern for saving face, would never have to worry about what his father might do after drinking too much and the burden on the estate's expenditures would also be correspondingly reduced. More importantly, now he had become the backbone of the Jin estate, and without exception, all of the visitors who came to offer condolences and express sympathy looked at him with eyes full of praise, saying, "Even in death your father will be able to set his mind at rest knowing that he has a son like you."

Isn't a dead person whose mind isn't at rest still just a dead person? Jin Yi'an wanted to laugh grimly.

Jin Yi'an rubbed his numb legs, stood up and shook off the ash on his clothes. Inwardly he was very pleased with how things went. He actually preferred that Jin Yilin burned the paintings. This was much better than having a conversation face to face with his brother about ideals and responsibilities to the household.

From then on, Jin Yi'an still frequently went to the "Flowerless Pavilion". His passion for the dancer he had so fancied faded somehow as day followed day, although he appeared to still dote on her. She made a display of flirting with other men, which he dismissed with a laugh, but deep down he felt alienated from her. It seemed that the woman he had truly loved had already been reduced to ashes and the living person in front of him was nothing more than a counterfeit. He knew that his train of thought was odd, but he could not alter this way of thinking. The dancer sensed his change of heart and wept and complained. Perhaps she had felt the relationship dulling early on and became estranged from him. She was the most popular woman in the "Flowerless Pavilion" and had no shortage of men to love her. Although Jin Yi'an came from a noble lineage, and aside from being handsome, he certainly wasn't any more outstanding than any other man.

6

Jin Yi'an didn't go to the courtesan house for a long time, absorbed as he was absorbed in the meticulous study of Go. His skills became more and more well known and he frequently invited Go masters to meet and play with him and there also were many people who dropped by to try their luck against him. When he was eighteen years old, Jin Yilin passed the literary state examination and in the fall he passed the military exam and by doing so became a legend around Seoul. Two years later he was appointed as the third ranking Imperial court investigator. This was the highest rank bestowed on anyone in the Jin family in over 60 years.

With Jin Yilin's career unfolding so smoothly, he no longer was so harsh on Jin Yi'an. Or perhaps he had completely lost faith in his ability to change him, which is how Jin Yi'an saw things.

Jin Yilin now wore the purple colored clothing of an official and was in glowing spirits. As the new bureaucratic appointee, he garnered much attention and every day there were invitations sent to his door. Jin Yi'an by contrast was like an imperial concubine who had been relegated to an unfrequented palace and whom even the servants gave a cold shoulder. It was rare for the brothers to have a chance to see each other. By the time that he woke up and ate breakfast, Jin Yilin had already left for the early court assembly and in the evening he never came home to have dinner.

Jin Yi'an was fine with this. His worry was that it had become harder and harder to find Go players that could compete with him and he started to write to Master Shuixin at the Lisu temple, over 150 kilometers away from Seoul.⁸² Master Shuixin's Go skills were consummate and it was said that there was no one who could play more than 300 moves with him before losing. Master Shuixin replied to every letter he received, writing on unadorned white paper in a steady yet free script, every phrase ordinary and yet profound.

The Western courtyard where Jin Yi'an lived was transformed into the Lisu temple of the Jin clan estate, showing how Jin Yi'an always seemed to be the last person in the family to discover any change. The roof tiles were replaced and the

⁸² Zdic.net, s.v. "离俗," accessed July 14, 2013, <http://www.zdic.net/>. Lisu literally means leaving a dusty world and also refers to "Avoiding the secular" or retreating to live in seclusion (隐居). No reference to an existing temple with this name could be found.

eave-tiles were changed to the newest style, the outer wall was painted, a new coat of lacquer was applied to the furniture and golden lute patterns were added to the furniture. He didn't have the faintest idea when the mansion gate had been torn down and then rebuilt anew, for one day as he returned home he happened to look up and was under the impression that he had gone to the wrong building!

The new mansion gate was now two times bigger than the original and the doorframe emitted the fragrant odor of lumber.

The Jin mansion was just like a dust-covered treasure that had been dusted clean and had now been filled with newly purchased adornments making it more and more fresh and bright. Occasionally, Jin Yilin would host a feast entertaining fellow bureaucrats.

7

The second time he met Princess Chunmei, Jin Yi'an attentively examined her to see how much she resembled the crown prince.

"Did you see that lunatic again today," the princess asked as soon as she saw him, "the one that wanted to break a piece of gold off of your carriage?"

"No." He replied. If she hadn't mentioned him, he would have forgotten about him entirely.

"I know why he went crazy," Princess Chunmei said with a mysterious expression, pausing intentionally and then continuing, "and it has something to do with you."

"It has something to do with me?" Jin Yi'an smiled.

"Doesn't something that is related to the Jin family estate also relate to you?"

She asked.

Jin Yi'an's smile vanished quickly.

"He is the son of an antique dealer. Just like everyone else in the imperial palace, he is fond of making discreet inquiries into other people's secrets. There is often a carriage parked outside the gate of your estate, covered from top to bottom in blue colored fabric shades that block the view inside. It always arrives after nightfall and leaves before dawn the next day. The royal investigator is a handsome and graceful new appointee and naturally people have been wondering who arrives in that carriage." She explained.

He realized that she had an infatuation with telling stories; she stared intensely at her audience and an irrepressible joyful excitement could be detected in her seemingly calm tone. In Yi'an had to control himself so that he could focus his attention on what she was saying.

"I have never seen the carriage that you refer to." Jin Yi'an said.

"Even if you haven't seen it, everyone else has, what secret can there be?"

Princess Chunmei glared at him for a moment, unhappy that she had been interrupted.

Jin Yi'an sealed his lips and said nothing else.

The princess became angry momentarily and couldn't help continuing.

"The son of the antique dealer made a bet with some others and waited all night outside your gate. The next day in the early morning a guest came out of your mansion and he followed the cart all around Seoul until he was so exhausted that his

tongue was hanging out of his mouth...That last part was my own addition. I guessed that he would be so tired that he would do that. Finally, he couldn't run any longer and surprisingly the carriage also stopped. Guess where the carriage stopped?"

Jin Yi'an shook his head. The princess was a little disappointed and she glared at Jin Yi'an for a moment.

"The carriage stopped at a forest not far from the Imperial palace. Several men in black clothes tore down the blue covers on the cart. The sun just happened to come out and the antique dealer's son saw the carriage suddenly, and in a brilliant flash of light, change into gold. Then the carriage shook its way into the palace without anyone getting in the way or showing any interest." She said.

"He told others about what happened and the rumor spread everywhere, although it is hard to say whether it is true or not because the antique dealer's son soon ended up how you saw him." She said.

"How, by chance, how did you happen to hear this story?" Jin Yi'an asked.

"The palace is full of black clothed imperial bodyguards. Whatever you want to know about, you can just dispatch a couple to go out and inquire," Princess Chunmei having more to say, continued, sighing, "but it is a pity that we don't know who it was that rode in the carriage. Could it be the imperial concubine?"

The rainy night when they drank tea together with the crown prince suddenly came to mind. In the split second that the crown prince had tore down his cloak, didn't he mistake the crown prince for the princess? The crown prince gazed into Jin Yilin's eyes as if he were not looking at a man, not to mention that his highness the crown prince's clothes were heavily perfumed. Jin Yi'an's heart started

to beat rapidly. After many days the smell of perfume had finally left his room, only to suddenly become strong again, like a hand that had extended into Princess Chunmei's wardrobe and taken grip of his throat.

Could a man fall in love with another man?! He thought.

"What's wrong with you?" The Princess asked.

"Nothing." He replied after a pause.

"Nothing?" She asked, her eyes not straying from his face, "Your face is paler than paper." She commented.

"Is that so?" He laughed awkwardly.

She furrowed her brow as if his laughter had made her very uncomfortable.

"Do you know who was in the carriage?" She asked.

"No." He responded firmly. His fragmentary thoughts flowed out through an invisible funnel and back into his head. "How did the antique dealer's son go crazy?" He asked.

"That is exactly the mysterious part of this whole affair," she said, emphasizing each word, "the only thing anyone knows is that he is crazy and no one knows when or how he went crazy. Naturally, no one can be certain that he actually went crazy because he told this story or if he was originally crazy which led him to tell such a story."

There were only ten days left until the princess's wedding when news of the sudden death of her fiancé⁸³ suddenly spread.

The day after he passed away, the prime minister went to the royal assembly with his hat in his hand and everyone realized that in one night all of his hair had turned gray. At the assembly, the prime minister kneeled for a long time and kowtowed with such force that his temples cracked and his face was covered in blood. In tears, he expressed his desire to resign his post and return to his hometown. Among those gathered there were none who remained unmoved.

The king was sympathetic to his plea, accepted his resignation and did not investigate further into the cause of death of his son in law to be.

The whole court was shocked by the vacancy of the prime minister and the princess's search for a new hand in marriage. Jin Yi'an watched the drama unfolding from a distance and yet had an inkling that trouble was brewing. Inevitably, attention was focused on Jin Yilin since his political ambition was widely known and he had been involved in an unusual relationship with the crown prince.

One night Jin Yilin and the crown prince went to Jin Yi'an's study to drink tea. In the wind, the bitter bamboo in the courtyard made a distinct textured sound.

⁸³ Zdic.net, s.v. "驸马," accessed July 14, 2013, <http://www.zdic.net/>. The term 驸马 (fuma/buma) means the "husband of the emperor's daughter" and in this case implies the "king's son in law to be" since the princess and him had not yet been married. By corollary, 驸马 also implies the "princess's fiancé." I have translated this as fiancé in all instances this work since the relational emphasis expected in English in this case would center on the princess's perspective. The original use of 驸马 referred to an official position in the Han Dynasty Imperial Court. After the Wei and Jin dynasties, the husband of the emperor's daughter was required to serve with the military rank of 驸马.

"The imperial palace is too feminine," The crown prince said as he breathed in deeply several times, smiling slightly, "the fresh air in your residence refreshes and gladdens the mind and heart."

When conversing with others, the crown prince liked to lower his eyes, and every now and then would raise his eyes to cast a glance at the person talking. At the assembly, Jin Yi'an stood in the crowd, far away from the crown prince who appeared like a Buddhist sculpture from a distance.

"The palace is full of exotic beauties, there are nine gorgeous princesses and the crown prince's concubine who is more beautiful than them all, and add to that the three hundred beauties at the king's side. You live among all of these amazing beauties in a veritable fragrant heavenly palace, yet I'm afraid that the refreshing quality you refer to is a pedantic metaphor." Jin Yilin said in good spirits and with a bright smile.

"What do you mean by fragrant heavenly palace?" The crown prince said without looking up and then softly retorted, "women are just women, they are as hard to deal with as snakes."

"Isn't it a man's honor to be in a tangle with a beautiful woman?" Jin Yilin replied.

"Women are like fragrant flowers, but if the fragrance is too intense it can choke you." Said the crown prince.

"You have a point. A woman's excessive passion and attachment are always the hardest things to bear." Said Jin Yilin.

The crown prince then said unhurriedly, "That is why the Princess Chunmei's fiancé died on top of a prostitute."

Jin Yi'an's hands trembled for a moment and hot water splashed on the back of his hand. Jin Yilin and the crown prince both grew quiet and looked at him.

"I am sorry..." The burnt area seemed like it had been pierced by innumerable needles simultaneously, and Jin Yi'an, despite his pain, lowered his head apologetically.

"Are you okay?" The crown prince looked attentively at Jin Yi'an's hand.

"I am fine." Jin Yi'an apologized with a bow, "I am so sorry I was so flustered..."

"Yi'an, it seems that you haven't heard about this..." Jin Yilin looked at him as he grabbed a towel and wiped the back of his hand and then turned toward the crown prince to explain.

The crown prince interrupted him, "Are you sure you are okay?" he asked Jin Yi'an.

"Yes I am okay. I am sorry" Jin Yi'an replied.

Jin Yilin became quiet.

"Surprisingly, there are people in Seoul who are unaware of the reason of his sudden death," The crown prince said, turning his head toward Jin Yilin, "yesterday at the White Pear Palace in the middle of the night Chunmei took the wedding dress that had been prepared for her, hung it in the garden and lit it on fire. The flames and smoke attracted the attention of the guards in black and even the King and Queen were alarmed."

"It seems that Princess Chunmei has the most distinct personality of anyone in the court." Jin Yilin laughed in response.

"Since she was born to the empress she can do whatever she pleases. She also made it known that she wants to pick her new groom." The crown prince held Jin Yi'an's teacup level with two hands and cast a sidelong glance at Jin Yilin, saying, "It seems that the princess has feelings for Yilin."

"Feelings for me?" Jin Yilin smiled, "That actually is a novel topic for discussion."

"Since you are accustomed to being admired, you simply dismiss the feelings of your admirers." Said the crown prince.

"What you just said is truly terrifying," Jin Yilin said the word 'terrifying', while holding his teacup up in a calm manner, smelling the fragrant aroma of the tea, "if I have in some way been lacking in manners, please feel free to criticize me."

The crown prince did not look at Jin Yilin for a moment and then continued, "Among the most prestigious households that have close relations with the royal family, all of the outstanding young men have already been engaged to other princesses and the lower-ranking officials are not even in consideration. No matter how you look at it, you are the most suitable candidate to be married to the princess. The queen asked me about your family background."

Jin Yi'an lowered his gaze and stared at the kettle on the stove.

"If I had known earlier that you were going to bring this up I would have had some wine beforehand," Jin Yilin laughed, "romantic matters are best discussed and most amusing when half drunk."

"You think that this has to do with romance?" The crown prince said while turning to Jin Yilin.

"What matters involving women don't pertain to romance?" Jin Yilin's unbridled speech made it seem that he actually was half drunk.

Jin Yi'an's heart dropped to his stomach.

"That's right, I almost forgot, you are the most renowned playboy in all of Seoul," The crown prince said sullenly and with an icy smile.

"Have I earned the reputation of lacking loyalty?"⁸⁴ Jin Yilin laughed as he responded to the crown prince as if he was completely unaware of his displeasure.

"In that case we should drink wine." The crown prince said as he placed cups on the table.

"I will go and get the wine." Jin Yi'an said and without waiting for a response, got up and went out.

9

While the servants went to the wine cellar to get wine, Jin Yi'an stopped by the kitchen for a moment and when he returned, the scene before his eyes almost scared him to death. A bookshelf had been kicked over and the kettle frame was

⁸⁴ Mu Du 杜牧, "Qianhuai" 遣怀 [Venting my Emotions], in *Tangshi Sanbai Shou* 唐诗三百首 [Three Hundred Tang Poems], ed. Shen Wenfan (沈文凡) (Changchun: Changchun Chubanshe (长春出版社) [Changchun Publishing House], 2011), 298. This is the last line of a well-known poem by the Tang poet Dumu. This poem expresses the author's regret at having spent ten years of his life licentiously engrossed in the sensual pleasures offered by the brothels of Yangzhou. All the years he spends in lovemaking only garners him the reputation of a heartless, unfaithful playboy. Here Jin Yilin turns the narrative statement of the poem into a rhetorical question.

sitting crooked next to the fallen bookshelf. The water flowing from the teapot had soaked the books on top of the woven mats, while water was boiling on the stove and the steam mixed together with the smoke from the coals making a strong choking odor.

Jin Yilin's expression stiffened and his appearance reminded Jin Yi'an of their father. When they were young and before their father had become completely absorbed in drinking, he would occasionally become distressed by certain matters and when that happened, he had exactly the same expression on his face.

The crown prince leaned his back against the wall, his face deathly pale, and his eye sockets were actually reddish-pink.

Jin Yilin looked at Jin Yi'an who was holding an earthen wine jar and reached out and snatched the jar from his hands, opened the seal and drank heartily from it. The wine that didn't make it into his mouth spilled out onto his clothes.

Jin Yi'an ran out to the courtyard, his heart beating rapidly without ceasing.

He stayed an hour in the garden. When he returned Jin Yilin and the crown prince had already left. Two servants were cleaning up the room and had replaced the cushions that had water or wine spilled on them. But the smell of wine didn't dissipate very quickly and the air in the room was filled with the fragrant, mellow smell of rice wine.

After Jin Yi'an fell asleep in the room next to the study, he could still smell the odor of wine and he did not sleep well at all and woke up many times in the night.

The next day, Jin Yi'an saw Jin Yilin who looked completely different from the dejected person he saw the night before. He had just been practicing martial arts and he was obviously hot as he wore relaxed pants and sat glowing with health and vigor on the veranda, his hands clasping a cup of hot tea as he watched Jin Yi'an, laughing at him as he approached.

"Have you been to the palace today?"

"Yes." Answered Jin Yi'an with a nod.

A court messenger arrived, and was led inside by the servant and approached from the side. Jin Yilin took the letter from the messenger and waved at Jin Yi'an.

10

"The clothing inside is more or less the same as the material I have. But the embroidery work is exquisite with silver silk embroidery of nine phoenixes facing the sun on the skirt hem, and on the belt of the jacket there are cassia flowers and leaves embroidered with gold and silver silk thread. The most exquisite part of was the silken outer garment that had auspicious designs of dragons and phoenixes." Princess Chunmei used her fingernail to draw several arcs on the surface of the table." The palace's greatest embroiderer's have been busy for half a year; you must have a look at the show of extravagance they put on when they work together. Last year when the crown prince's imperial concubine married into the imperial family, the full dress she wore almost made us laugh ourselves silly. But she is very beautiful, and most people only pay attention to her face, unlike us who are only concerned with what she wears." She said.

Princess Chunmei wore a white short jacket with a green skirt as she stood in front of the window. Her hair had just been washed and hung at both side of her cheeks like two bolts of black satin. In several days since their last meeting, she had lost a little weight; her chin was more pointed and her eyes larger.

"I lit the fire myself. The instant the clothing lit on fire was truly brilliant. I suppose that guy's happy moment with the prostitute must have been equally brilliant until he breathed his last breath..." She said.

"Princess Chunmei..." He replied. Jin Yi'an's face was hot and he gazed outside for a moment at the palace maids standing on the platform of the wooden veranda whose silhouettes were reflected on the algae paper pasted on the window shutters, like trees fluttering in the wind.

"Etiquette attendant, you are blushing." The princess sat down next to the table, her arms propped on the table with her chin resting on her hands, looking at Jin Yilin.

"Please don't..." He said.

Standing close to her, her hair had the strong perfume of sweet sedge and he was seized by the desire to run his fingers through her hair.

"Your shy manner is just like a woman." She said frivolously as if she herself was a man teasing a woman and looking for amusement in the Fragrant Pavilion and spoke in his face with a delicate voice, her mouth breathing out as if it were the tip of a blade of grass pulling up across his face.

Jin Yi'an was a little angry. He was the etiquette attendant yet had become the object of her senseless trouble making. He didn't know why she was so obsessed with making herself out to be such an experienced romancer.

"Don't you feel brilliant knowing that your fiancé died while with a prostitute?" He asked coldly. Her expression changed and she slowly leaned back, and sat up straight. "If you heard the rumors going around, you wouldn't speak like that." Jin Yi'an spoke as if he were talking about someone who had nothing to do with the princess, "Knowing that he went to brothel seeking pleasure with his wedding day at hand, what will they then say about you? Do you think that with those filthy rumors going around your spotless reputation will not be tarnished? You are not even a match for that prostitute. I am willing to bet that prostitute has a lot of admiring visitors lined up to see her right now. After all, who wouldn't be interested in meeting a woman who has defeated a princess? To be frank, even I would like to see her. Speaking of brilliance, that prostitute's is the one who must feel brilliant."

The princess had bit her lip until it started to lose color.

"Then why don't you go see her?" She asked.

"I lose interest the moment I think of your dead fiancé."

The princess raised her hands and before Jin Yi'an had a chance to react and slapped him on the face.

"How do you dare speak so wantonly!?"

"It is only because people disgrace themselves that other people also dishonor them." Jin Yi'an said.

She raised her other hand and slapped him again on his other cheek.

Jin Yi'an smiled slightly.

"Even though your actions are crude, the way you are acting now is much more befitting your status than your frivolity a moment ago."

"Are you saying that I am frivolous?" She asked.

"You are frivolous." He responded.

Princess Chunmei raised her hand to hit him again, and as she lifted her hand, the momentum lifted her hair into the air as she said, "You dare to informally address me?"⁸⁵

"Yes." He replied.

The princess's hand paused in the air, her eye sockets red and a tear softly trembled within her eye more and more tremulously until finally it became as round as a ball and shattered on her cheek with a splash. She raised her arm and turned away, using the back of her hand to wipe her eyes.

Even more tears flowed down from her eyes until his heart finally softened. He liked how she looked when she flew into a rage and liked how her tears flowed down her face even more. She was a young maiden preparing for marriage, and seemed as delicate as a poppy flower. Seeing her this way tugged at his heartstrings. With great difficulty, he resisted the temptation to pull out the table from in between them and console her in his embrace.

⁸⁵ In this passage, Jin Yi'an addresses Princess Chunmei without the proper honorific form that would be appropriate given her higher social status. In the text, Yi'an uses the more casual 你, instead of 您 which would have been expected. Honorific forms are especially common in Korean in which improper usage indicates great disrespect.

Jin Yi'an couldn't sleep that night. He lit the lamp, prepared some scented tea, and fished Go pieces out of a porcelain jar one by one, delicately cleaned each one with a silk cloth, and then put them back in the jar. He had failed to notice Jin Yilin arrive and had no idea how long he had been standing on the veranda.

"I saw that you had the light on over here so I came over." Yilin said as he stood standing as if he were bathing in the fine drizzle.

Yi'an promptly rose and said, "Please come in and have a seat."

"I'll have a cup of tea," Yilin lifted the hem of his long gown, arranged it and sat down. "You don't have to go to too much trouble, anything is fine."

Jin Yi'an quickly washed the teacups and boiled water, first rinsing the teacups with hot water, and then scooped a small spoonful of sparrow-tongue tea into the teacups. Ripples seemed to repeatedly arose from within the sunken lines of the porcelain cups and after the tea leaves fell in the water, a soft green color slowly burst forth from the leaves, one short and one long, shaped just like two sparrow's tongues.

"A moment ago a messenger came from the palace," Yilin held his teacup and took a sip, "the prostitute frequented by the princess's fiancé has been killed."

Yi'an stood dumbfounded holding the teakettle in his hand.

"Princess Chunmei sent a covert message in the queen's name commanding the Imperial bodyguards to do it. The bodyguards brought the dancer's head back to the queen in a wooden box that frightened the queen so much that she fainted on

the spot. The king was furious and ordered the princess to be imprisoned within the palace, and forbade her from leaving." Yilin said. He gazed at Yi'an and asked him, "What did you say to Princess Chunmei today?"

Jin Yi'an said nothing in reply to his brother.

"The palace maids said that after you departed, the princess went into a rage and summoned the Imperial bodyguards." Jin Yilin said.

"..."

"Fortunately the crown prince helped resolve the dispute, otherwise..." Jin Yilin's eyes were like torches, and his tone of voice became serious, "Do you, the etiquette attendant, who comes and goes in and out of the palace, need to be reminded of the importance of being cautious in speech and careful in action?" Jin Yilin asked.

"I offer my sincere apologies." Jin Yi'an said as he lowered his head. Jin Yilin sighed and Jin Yi'an said, "My own incompetence has brought humiliation upon you."

"Anyhow, it is useless to blame yourself," Jin Yilin stared at Jin Yi'an and then continued, "what are you doing carrying that kettle around?"

Jin Yi'an put the kettle back onto the stove.

"Never let this happen again." Jin Yilin said, "Luckily, Princess Chunmei is the queen's own flesh and blood and as such the queen will not cause her to suffer."

"I am so sorry." Said Jin Yi'an.

"Rest well and go to bed early." Jin Yilin replied and then finished his tea and returned to the east courtyard.

The next day Jin Yi'an went to the White Pear palace early in the morning. He hadn't sleep all night and when he walked he was completely off balance. While riding a carriage, he reclined against the window frame, the sound of the horse's hooves clopping along putting him in a daze, and he dozed off.

Princess Chunmei was sitting on the veranda, hugging her knees with her head sitting on her knees at an angle. Her gaze quietly followed Yi'an as he approached.

"I saw her last night," she said looking up to Jin Yi'an with a vague smile, "she stood next to the headboard of my bed, looking at me without blinking."

Jin Yi'an sat next to her without responding. There were no palace maids within sight, which he guessed was because the princess had sent them all away in her anger.

"Do you think it is possible that there are ghosts?" She asked.

"Of course not." He replied.

"But I saw her, her face was exactly the same as the head in the wooden box," Princess Chunmei replied and drew a line on her neck with her finger, saying, "there was a red line here on her neck. It must have been left over from the beheading."

"You are letting your imagination run wild." Said Jin Yi'an.

"I am not letting my imagination run wild," Princess Chunmei was angry and looked hatefully at Jin Yi'an, "if I had stretched out my hand I could have touched her."

"That was just your imagination and nothing more," Yi'an retorted firmly, "if you had actually stretched out your hand you would have discovered that there was nothing there."

"There is no way I would stretch out my hand," The princess's face was pale, under her eyes there were dark circles under her eyes, and while she hugged both knees she said, "if I had held out my hand, she would have grabbed me and taken me to the netherworld."

"She wouldn't have taken you away, you weren't the one that killed her." He said.

"It was I. I was the one that ordered the imperial bodyguards to do it." Said the princess.

"It wasn't you," Jin Yi'an continued, "it was I. It was only because of what I said to anger you that you acted so foolishly."

"You had the nerve to drop honorifics when you spoke with me." Princess Chunmei stared intently at Jin Yi'an. After quite a while had passed, she laughed, covered her mouth as she yawned and said, "Think about it however you wish."

He laughed.

They looked at a hibiscus tree growing near the entrance to the White Pear Palace.

"This is the White Pear Palace, how is it that there is a hibiscus growing here?" He asked.

"It could be because the meaning of word pear is inauspicious, although I actually am quite fond of pear flowers. They are fresh and clean, are not in poor

taste and are very grand when they bloom it is as if there is frost and snow pushing down on the limbs. Hibiscus flowers are also white but fall into little bits and pieces, and when they bloom densely they tightly stick to the tree branches, looking exhausted as if they had risked their life. In the evening when the flowers fall it is actually very beautiful and dazzling, but inevitably strikes a melancholic chord in the hearts of those who see it." She explained.

Jin Yi'an looked at the hibiscus and at the same time started to see the princess in a new light. From the start he had wondered where she had learned to play Go so well since her excellent skills could not be explained by talent alone. Her calmness and unperturbed certainty in the outcome of a Go match was beyond the reach of an ordinary person. The first time the crown prince went to Jin Yi'an's place to have tea, at Jin Yilin's suggestion, he and the crown prince played a game of Go. The crown prince's opening was a show of extravagance and Jin Yi'an could tell from a single glance that he had been trained by a famous Go master, but after playing for a while, his inadequacy was revealed. If the crown prince were to play against Princess Chunmei, he would certainly lose within the first fifty moves. Although Jin Yi'an had barely applied himself, he had defeated the crown prince in 200 moves.

"I am sleepy," The princess covered her face with her sleeves as she yawned and looked at Yi'an with tearful eyes as she said, "I do not dare close my eyes after dark."

"Go to sleep. I will stay here and stand guard," He replied. Jin Yi'an felt her hair; it was very soft and smooth as silk. He said, "If she comes, I will tell her that she has found the wrong person."

"And will you have her take a chariot to the Jin residence to look for you?"

Princess Chunmei asked mischievously.

"Yes I will." He replied.

"Come into the room and keep me company," Princess Chunmei stood up and looked at Jin Yi'an hesitatingly, "if you sit here, you will not be able to obstruct her."

Jin Yi'an looked up at Princess Chunmei, but she had already turned around and entered the room.

He sat for a while and then followed her in to the room.

13

Princess Chunmei lay down without looking at him and patted the spot next to her with her hand, indicating he should lie down. Jin Yi'an took off his shoes, and lay down next to her. She looked like a cat as she approached with lightning speed and buried her face in his embrace, with one hand holding his neck and her other hand holding his hand with fingers interlocking. His chin supported her head and the fragrance of sweet sedge flowers emanated like silk thread from her hair, making him feel as if he had been wound up in marsh grass.

Jin Yi'an's heart beat quickly and urgently, and he could perceive the palpitation and flow of blood in his hand that was interlocked with the princess's. She was as nervous as he was, and her body was curled up tightly. He was motionless and imagined that he was a cotton field, or a giant leaf lying still. Princess Chunmei slowly relaxed and her body became lighter and lighter as if she were going to float away from his embrace.

He looked back at her to see how she was doing.

He saw that she was fast asleep.

Jin Yi'an was very surprised at how calm and serene he felt. He felt a gentle and tender feeling flowing through him, a feeling that he had never felt before, as if his mind gradually became clear and bright after having been stuck in gridlock in a Go game.

He saw the woman standing at the bedside, and sure enough, she had a red line on her neck, and a hostile smile. Jin Yi'an was so frightened that he broke into a cold sweat and woke up suddenly, while Princess Chunmei slept soundly in his embrace, unconsciously grasping him firmly when he moved.

Jin Yi'an raised his head, noticed that the window was propped open. He could see a partial view of the courtyard, and the crown prince and Jin Yilin standing in front of the window looking at them.

Jin Yi'an thought his eyesight was blurred and when he looked at the window again, no one was there, yet it seemed as if bright yellow colored clothing had flashed before his eyes.

His vision must have been blurred. Or perhaps he was dreaming. They were like the ghost woman, merely figments of his imagination. There hadn't been anyone standing in front of the window. Jin Yi'an calmed himself and persuaded himself to focus his attention on counting Princess Chunmei's eyelashes.

At nightfall, when he was leaving the White Pear Palace, the officer at the palace gate stepped close to him and said, "I expected that you would leave together with the crown prince and the court investigator."

Jin Yi'an got in the carriage without saying a word. The carriage took off and Yi'an reclined his head against the carriage window, his mood changing in step with the deepening twilight around him, becoming more and more desolate with every moment.

14

Jin Yilin stood on the porch watching Jin Yi'an approach.

"I'm back." Jin Yi'an said with a slight bow. He worried that his body was steeped in the fragrance of perfume and didn't dare to get too close to Jin Yilin.

"Oh." Jin Yilin responded indifferently.

The two of them were silent for a moment.

"You were at the palace all day long, you must be exhausted from your work."

Jin Yi'an raised his eyes and looked at Jin Yilin. Jin Yilin was expressionless.

"Rest a bit and have some dinner." Jin Yilin said.

"Okay." Jin Yi'an replied.

As Jin Yi'an walked toward the western courtyard, he felt as if Jin Yilin's gaze was burning against his back. He couldn't help but turn his head around and contrary to what he imagined, Jin Yilin had his back turned to him and was staring at his shoes. His body was tall and erect, but his head was hanging down, and he appeared desolate from behind. He stared blankly at him for a moment and then turned around and left.

Once he returned to his room, Jin Yi'an took off his outer clothing, buried his head in his clothing, and sniffed hard, unsure if it was just his imagination or he actually smelled the fragrance of perfume. He recalled Princess Chunmei's body

tightly curled up against his bosom, and although it was untimely, a bolt of ecstasy ran through his body, making him tremble.

15

He wasn't sure when Princess Chunmei had woken up, at the time his head was swirling with thoughts of the crown prince and Jin Yilin and how they could have possibly gone to the White Pear Palace out of the blue. Had they gone there to look for him or to discuss the marriage of Princess Chunmei and Jin Yilin? If that was the case, and Jin Yilin saw him and the princess together under such circumstances, what would possibly happen?

"What are you thinking about?" She asked him. Jin Yi'an lowered his head to look at her and was frightened at the sight of Princess Chunmei's large and clear eyes.

"Are you awake?" He asked her.

"Yes." She said as she nodded her head, and sat up as she stared at Jin Yi'an who was also raising himself to sit.

"You were really deep in thought, what were you thinking about?" She asked.

Jin Yi'an wasn't sure whether he should laugh or cry. After Princess Chunmei slept for a couple hours, it was as if she had totally forgotten about the dreadful events she described, and once again had become usual self, vivacious and lively and curious about everything.

"Were you thinking of a woman?" She asked

Jin Yi'an thought of the woman he dreamt of and said, "Yes."

"You really were thinking of a woman?" She asked again.

"Yes, I was." He replied.

"You have the impertinence to..." Princess Chunmei raised her hand to slap him across the face; her eyes open wide with anger as she said, "How dare you?!"

"I was thinking of you." Jin Yi'an replied. Princess Chunmei stopped, staring blankly and then her expression instantly changed.

"You have a lot of guts," She spoke harshly, yet she blushed as red as a ripe apple saying, "thinking of me? What were you thinking of me?"

Jin Yi'an didn't say anything, and didn't move either. His desire was like a snake stretching its head out from a jumbled mess of feelings, attempting to struggle free of his body and throw itself toward the warm, soft and fragrant body next to him.

"I better be going now..." Jin Yi'an heard himself say with a course voice. Princess Chunmei didn't respond. His temples were pounding and his mouth was very dry.

"Then why don't you leave?" She said.

Princess Chunmei's menacing response sounded more like encouragement to him. Jin Yi'an was faint as if he was afraid she would say something even more frightful, and he seized the opportunity to kiss her deeply. Her lips were very soft, almost like two flower petals, totally different from the strong mouth with which she typically addressed him so firmly. Although she spoke harshly, he realized that she was as pure as ice.

Her skirt had many layers and his hand had to meander in circles and expend a great deal of energy in order to find the place he was looking for. Her skin was smooth and cool, and saturated with too much moisture. As if in a trance he felt like his finger had been wrapped around another layer of silk fabric.

16

Jin Yi'an didn't want to eat supper with Jin Yilin but he also couldn't think of any good excuse, so he washed up, changed clothes, and went to the dining room where Jin Yilin was already seated, the meal prepared on the table.

"I apologize for coming late..." Jin Yilin said as he sat down. Jin Yilin nodded and ordered the servant to pour wine.

"Tonight we are going to drink well." Jin Yilin said.

Jin Yi'an did not have as much capacity for drinking as Jin Yilin. In the past when their father was alive, their father only wanted to drink with the elder son.

The servant filled the cups.

"Cheers." Jin Yilin raised his cup and drank it down in one gulp.

"Cheers." Jin Yi'an replied also raising his cup to drink.

The servant filled the cups again.

After three cups, Jin Yi'an's whole body began to feel very light from the alcohol that rose from his stomach.

"I am done." Jin Yi'an said, waving to Jin Yilin, "I have never been able to drink very much."

"You're fine!" Jin Yilin laughed as he raised his cup again. "Who said you're not okay?"

Jin Yi'an knew perfectly well that if he continued to drink he would collapse drunk and only reluctantly raised the glass again. When his sleeves covered his face, he thought for a moment of secretly pouring the wine out, but it was just a sudden idea that he disregarded and instead drank down the next three glasses that were passed to him.

Jin Yilin let the servant take his leave and although there was a large decorative mat in the dining room, only the two brothers remained, and the mood suddenly became cold and cheerless. As dizzy and giddy as Jin Yi'an was, he suddenly felt sober and clearheaded.

"Today I went to the palace to meet with the queen," Jin Yilin said, "and talked with her concerning the marriage of Princess Chunmei and I."

Jin Yilin's words were like cold water splashed on Jin Yi'an, sobering him up. "I am her new fiancé." Jin Yilin continued.

"Princess Chunmei will be very willing to marry you," Jin Yi'an said, "she has adored you for a long time."

Jin Yilin looked at him as if he were lying.

"The first time I went to the White Pear Palace, she told me as much herself," Jin Yi'an said, meeting Jin Yilin's gaze, and summoning up the courage to continue, "she said that the reason she kept me as the etiquette attendant was because I look like you. She also hoped that you would go visit her at the White Pear Palace."

"Is that so?" Jin Yilin laughed, "Then why didn't you tell me earlier?"

"At that time her fiancé... I mean to say that as the former prime minister's son was engaged to her and she was therefore restrained. Even though Princess Chunmei is nobility, she couldn't simply do whatever she pleased."

"You are right," Jin Yilin said, "no one can do whatever he or she please. Not the crown prince, not the princess, not me and not you either."

Jin Yi'an's scalp went numb, and all of a sudden he recalled the pledge of undying love that he made to the dancer when they were in love, and their oath that if they renounced this pledge, they would have to "spill three liters of blood and swallow a thousand needles." Now, at this moment, he sincerely wished he could spill three liters of blood and swallow a thousand needles.

"We sure scared you to death today at the White Pear Palace, didn't we?" Jin Yilin asked, "but you also frightened me greatly. I never would have imagined that you and Princess Chunmei would become intimate with each other."

Intimate? Jin Yi'an sighed, although they had made physical contact, he still wasn't sure what Princess Chunmei thought of him. She liked Jin Yilin, and yet was only half willing to accept him. What did she take him to be, a substitute for Jin Yilin?

"Do you believe in ghosts?" Jin Yi'an asked.

"Ghosts?!" Jin Yilin stared at Jin Yi'an skeptically.

"The ghost was none other than the dancer that was intimate with the son of the prime minister." Jin Yi'an said, "Princess Chunmei said that she couldn't sleep all night long and kept dreaming of the dancer standing over her bed staring at her."

"That is nothing more than her fanciful imagination." Jin Yilin said.

"That is also what I said, but I also dreamt of that woman, just as Princess Chunmei described, with a red line across her neck, as if her head had been cut off and a scar left behind."

"That is truly preposterous." Jin Yilin laughed out loud.

"It is preposterous, but it is true." Jin Yi'an gazed at Jin Yilin, "I woke in fright, and then saw you and the crown prince."

Jin Yilin didn't say anything.

"I don't believe in ghosts. There are only ghosts in peoples hearts and minds, and that is why they see ghosts," Jin Yilin laughed, "lets not talk of this matter, lets drink."

Jin Yi'an raised his cup and drank it clean and a hot and spicy torrent fell down to his stomach with a splash.

17

At the mere mention of the rainy season, it came.

It was the end of summer and the very beginning of fall, and yet somehow the atmosphere coalesced together all of the scorching, roasting heat of a whole summer that then burst forth energetically, emitting the odor of an oven full of baked goods. Storms at such times were violent and ruthless, the wind was strong and the sound of the rain pounding on the ceiling tiles could be alarming, and intermingled with the rain and the moisture there was a gloomy and cold breeze.

After every rainfall some bamboo leaves were blown over by the storm, and after a few rainfalls the ground was covered with a think layer of leaves. At the same

time the new bamboo plants grew rapidly, quickly fleeing upward beyond their roots as if they were flames drawing on the power of the wind.

Jin Yi'an felt that he was like a bamboo plant, having a hollow core, yet having emotions that were like quickly growing bamboo branches, which, since they couldn't find their core essence, were impelled even more to flee upward.

Princess Chunmei sent officials to summon him several times, and each time he refused, giving the excuse that he had caught a cold.

It wasn't that he didn't want to see her, but rather that he didn't dare to meet her. Also he selfishly felt that there was no need for him meet with Princess Chunmei and express the remorse and guilt he felt towards his brother. Every time a palace official came and left, he thought of Jin Yilin. Jin Yilin entered and left the imperial palace freely, and he knew why the palace officials were coming. But Jin Yi'an didn't notice anything particular in Jin Yilin's expression. He usually didn't eat at home and typically came home very late.

It was as if the Jin family residence had an invisible river flowing through it, with Jin Yi'an on one side, and Jin Yilin on the other bank of the river.

Jin Yi'an actually didn't mind the rain.

When it rained, at least it wasn't so desolate and empty in the courtyard.

18

Jin Yi'an passed so many days in a muddleheaded state that one evening when Princess Chunmei appeared before him, he was under the impression that that he was dreaming.

As the servants who escorted her greeted him and were in the process of leaving, their questioning gaze made Jin Yi'an realize how very strange the scene taking place in front of him was.

"Rumor has it that you caught an extremely serious cold and are on the brink of death," Princess Chunmei's face was taut, "I, however, didn't believe it and had to come see you with my own eyes."

"How is it possible that...you left the palace?" Jin Yi'an's legs were weak and he couldn't stand for very long.

"I had Yilin bring me out," Princess Chunmei took off her cloak, "your servants mistook me for the crown prince; they just called me by his title. Do I look like him?" She asked.

Jin Yi'an's heart was like an egg that had been cracked open against a rock, the fluid flying in all directions. He sized up the men's clothing she was dressed in and didn't know if it he should cry or laugh.

"Why are you just standing staring at me?!" Princess Chunmei started to become angry at Jin Yi'an's silence, "Your look so strange! Are you actually sick?!"

"Please come in and have some tea." Jin Yi'an exclaimed as he rose to lead her in. Princess Chunmei didn't look pleased, but entered his room and looked around, her expression brightening.

"Your room looks like a monk's room." She said. Jin Yi'an didn't say anything in return.

"They say we are going to go to war and the Qing army is amassing supplies and troops at the border. The sentiment in the imperial palace is that of anxiousness

on all sides and the King is ill," Princess Chunmei sighed, "now everything depends on the empress." She said.

"..."

"Why are you so silent?" Princess Chunmei asked. "Do you have any idea how complicated it was for me to get out of the palace?"

"I heard that you are going to marry my older brother, is that right?" Jin Yi'an asked.

"I figured out," the princess looked at Jin Yi'an, and gradually blushed saying, "where you caught your cold."

"I should congratulate you. From the beginning you have been fond of my older brother." He said.

"I really like Yilin, but I also really like you. I want to be with him and I also want to be with you." The princess called out angrily as if she were acting rashly out of a feeling of injustice.

Jin Yi'an was silent.

"Are you going to scold me again for being frivolous?" She asked.

"You are very frivolous." Jin Yi'an sighed.

Princess Chunmei stared at him resentfully. He reached his hand out to her, and she brushed it aside. He reached his hand out to her again, and she hit it aside again.

"Aren't frivolous women really annoying?" She stared at him with her eyes wide open.

"I am very annoyed by your frivolity." Jin Yi'an continued, "You are so frivolous, and you also are my elder brother's fiancé, and as such I do not know the proper way to respond to you." He said.

Princess Chunmei turned pale and she suddenly stood up and started to leave. Jin Yi'an reached out his hand without thinking just as she was raising her foot. He pulled strongly on her leg and she lost her footing and fell askew into his embrace.

In his impatience, Jin Yi'an couldn't find the belt around Princess Chunmei's clothing and she cried out as he tore her underwear. Jin Yi'an's whole body was shaking and the rivers within him were surging violently against the dam of willpower and restraint until desire completely overcame him and surged in all directions. As he roamed freely within her, he kept thinking of Jin Yilin.

"You will meet with justice." He said to himself.

Early the next day, before the servants woke, Jin Yi'an seized the chance to gather a few simple articles and left home, not planning to return. The weather was damp and cold and it was very foggy. At the market he waited for a very long time before he saw anyone. He hired a carriage and immediately hit the road, and was constantly on the move on government roads for a day and a half, and then he spent another half of a day climbing mountain roads. When he finally arrived at Lisu temple he let out a long breath, turned his head and looked behind him, where the sunset was hanging in the sky just like a gorgeous cape, rising in the western sky.

Oh the innumerable worldly entanglements of humans, he thought to himself as tears blurred his vision.

Master Shuixin was a wrinkly, skinny old man yet bore a pleasant countenance and was dressed from head to toe in monk's robes that had been washed a clean white. Every day after he finished lunch, he would spread out a piece of paper on the table, and use a fine pen to mark out a Go strategy playbook, bending his waist and neck to the point that he resembled a shrimp. Even though Jin Yi'an was depressed, he couldn't help but smile. Jin Yi'an had spent a month at the temple, but Master Shuixin still hadn't played a match with him.

Jin Yi'an was unbearably lonely, and as such had requested the chance to play with the master. "Wait a little longer." The master said with a smile.

All of Master Shuixin's possessions were very old, yet his eyes were clear, perceptive and full of vigor and entirely unlike an elderly person. Jin Yi'an felt that in one glance, the master understood him inside and out.

The courtyard at the Lisu temple had a rare red hibiscus tree that was said to be over three hundred years old. Seeing it then in the evening, and after the flowering season had passed, Jin Yi'an reckoned that every evening throughout the summer blood red flowers would have floated down and covered the ground like drops of blood. What a depressing sight that must have been, he thought to himself.

It was only after a long time had passed that the news of war spread to Lisu temple.

And a little later, the imperial bodyguards, dressed all in black, appeared suddenly at Lisu temple like heavenly forces sent from above. Jin Yi'an returned home with the bodyguards, although none of them told him how they had found him, nor spoke any word to him of what had happened in the war. They were completely silent.

Jin Yi'an only heard of the turn of events later on, one after another.

When they were at the brink of war, Jin Yilin was the first and most staunch representative of the pro-war faction.⁸⁷ Jin Yi'an could imagine his older brother's invincible and graceful bearing as he brandished his speech like a weapon. He presented his ideas in both the civil and military departments and spoke so enthusiastically that the words that burst forth feverishly from his mouth and glistened and flashed brightly.

"There are two questions that cannot be avoided. First, why should we go to war? And second, what is worse than being defeated in battle?" He asked. Jin Yilin put forth this question to the civil and military bureaucrats as if he were throwing an unlit firecracker amongst them and then he looked each of the ministers in the eye as if he was determining who had the courage to ignite it.

⁸⁷ JaHyun Kim Haboush, "Dead Bodies in the Postwar Discourse of Identity in Seventeenth-Century Korea: Subversion and Literary Production in the Private Sector," 415-442. The escalation toward war that unfolds here refers to the Second Manchu Invasion of Korea in 1636, in which the Qing army overpowered the Joseon forces that had initially refused to submit to the Qing efforts to make Korea a tributary state.

"To be defeated in battle is not disgraceful, to not fight and be defeated is what is most disgraceful." He said.

Jin Yilin proclaimed that he was abandoning his role as state investigator and requested appointment as an ordinary military official.

No one anticipated that he would do this, especially since he was the princess's fiancé. Why would he go to the battlefield and bring such trouble and hardship on himself?

Some guessed that perhaps he just wanted to appear faithful so that he could curry favor with the King.

Jin Yilin began to fervently attempt to arouse everyone's nationalist sentiments. The crown prince flung himself headlong into this effort with such devotion that he followed Jin Yilin's every movement and hung to every word he uttered, as if he were a bird pecking for grain from Jin Yilin's mouth. Later, he surprised many people in the court by going to king to request permission to go to the front lines to supervise the troops and boost their morale.

Jin Yi'an heard that during that time, there was a glorious light shining from the Jin residence and a veritable river of carriages and horses were lined up in front of their door. These pro-war officials all assembled in the main hall and their loud discussions were audible even outside the walls of their residence.

The crown prince inevitably went to the Jin residence every evening and many officials became supporters of Jin Yilin's ideas because of the crown prince's involvement and enthusiasm at these meetings. The housekeepers said that the eyes of the officials coming to the residence shined with a bright spirit and they all talked

cheerfully together. From what they said, it sounded like they were not on the brink of war, but rather an unprecedented and truly grand festival.

The influence of the pro-war faction gradually expanded and they decided to beat back the Qing's invasion. As he desired, Jin Yilin was named a military leader and the other officials came to salute the new leader of the forces destined for the front lines. Many people described, each in their own way and with varying emotions, how grand Jin Yilin appeared was when he donned his silver helmet and armor, glowing with health and vigor.

Jin Yi'an also happened to hear that more than half of the soldiers were recruited right then and there. Within half a month, the recruits had learned to use their weapons very naturally even though they previously had far better control of farm tools. They followed behind the primary forces, as they rushed to the battlefield.

21

They were defeated in an even more miserable fashion than was expected.

Not long after the Mid-Autumn festival, Jin Yilin's body was transported back to Seoul from Kanghwa Island.^{88 89}

⁸⁸ JaHyun Kim Haboush, "Dead Bodies in the Postwar Discourse of Identity in Seventeenth-Century Korea: Subversion and Literary Production in the Private Sector," 431. Earlier, in the thirteenth century, Kanghwa Island had been a haven for royalty fleeing the invading Mongols, but in the seventeenth-century the Manchu army landed on it with ease, anticipating the royal family would flee there.

⁸⁹ Michael J. Seth, 149. The Crown Prince Sohyŏn, fled to Kanghwa with other royal family members not long after the Qing invasion began. It was only after the Qing captured Kanghwa island and took members of the royal family hostage that King Injo, surrendered to the Qing forces. Crown prince Sohyŏn then submitted himself as a hostage of the Qing.

Jin Yi'an was taken back the Jin family residence and was told that the person lying on the stretcher covered in plain white cloth was none other than Jin Yilin. Everyone's attention was focused on him, and they had been waiting for him to return from the battlefield. Jin Yi'an mustered up the courage to pull back the cloth to expose his brother. Instantly, chaos erupted among those gathered, some people shrieked, some suddenly embraced each other, some temporarily could not control themselves and kneeled down and vomited, while others turned and ran away. Only the imperial bodyguards stood there expressionless, as usual.

Jin Yilin was no longer himself. It was more appropriate to say that he had become a scorched wooden stump.

Jin Yilin wished desperately that he could react like others did; shriek, vomit, embrace someone or even simply just run away. His whole body was trembling but his mind was unusually clear and he didn't go anywhere since staying right in that spot was his responsibility.

Jin Yilin wasn't himself anymore, yet nonetheless there he was. Seeing Jin Yilin laid out brutally before him suddenly made the reality of death and war in distant lands hit so close to home and made it seem so bloody and so intensely massive in scale. Jin Yi'an heard weeping, like rain falling down all around him.

The crown prince could not return with Jin Yilin. He was made a hostage of the Qing and was imprisoned, along with a few officials with him, in a relay station for mail carriers. Once or twice a week an envoy would set off to go to see the prince.

According to the news that came back, the crown prince was in a very worrisome state.

The imperial rulers were stuck in a complicated situation. In order to bring the crown prince back home as quickly as possible, the queen accepted all of terms the Qing stipulated. Furthermore, she appointed her older cousin as the new prime minister. On the second day on the job, the new prime minister went to the Jin residence, decked in new clothing, to pay his respects to the spirit of Jin Yilin.

22

Having been silent for a longtime, the Jin residence again bustled with the noise and excitement of the Prime Ministers visit. People came in an endless stream to offer their condolences. The scene was different though from the fervor and excitement before the military campaign. Now the people coming into the main hall were all solemn and respectful and aside from the sound made by their robes as they moved about, it was so silent that even a pin could be heard falling.

"Restrain your grief and accept fate." Such was the consolation that Jin Yi'an heard from everyone.

"I thank you from the bottom of my heart for coming today," Jin Yi'an said bowing, remembering the posture of Jin Yilin when he was in their father's mourning hall. He wasn't sure whether his posture seemed as polite and modest as his brother's, but he was convinced that his intonation sounded quite sincere. Jin Yi'an could not accustom himself to the new identity lying before him. It was as if he

was incapable of believing that this scorched body lying in front of the mourning hall was actually Jin Yilin.

When Jin Yilin passed away, the fearful vanguard was also laid to rest, like a sword placed back in its scabbard, and this made many people decide to show their grief with no lack of genuine and sincere regards.

The king commended Jin Yilin by bestowing on him the posthumous title of One who Sacrifices His Life for His Country. Those officials who had never shown up at the Jin residence arrived one after another to offer their condolences.

The funeral arrangements took over a month to complete, including the selection of a propitious day to lay Jin Yilin to rest. His grave was built behind his parent's grave and because his official post had been higher than that of his parents, his grave was much larger and more imposing than that of his parents.

After the funeral concluded, Jin Yi'an sat alone next to his brother's grave for a while, noticing that the two graves of his parents in front of him and Jin Yilin's grave together formed a triangle. No matter how long he sat there thinking, however, he couldn't figure out where his own grave should be placed.

It was already dark by the time he returned to the residence. The building was pitch black, like a beast gasping for breath. Jin Yi'an walked around the eastern courtyard, down the veranda, and gazed through a wide-open window into a study, and was unconsciously horrified by what he saw. There was a person dressed in white, sitting and drinking tea. Wasn't it Jin Yilin?

His hands trembled and only after fumbling several times could he get the door open, but where was the person he thought was in the room? All he found was

a bunch of white chrysanthemums in full bloom.⁹⁰ This type of chrysanthemum bloomed in late fall, had slender branches, and was planted in a very large pot. Jin Yi'an walked over and picked a few branches, put them under his nose but didn't smell the fragrance or notice the typical slightly spicy odor similar to Chinese mugwort.

Jin Yi'an took the chrysanthemum with him to his room and put it in a flower vase, lighted some juniper incense and then slept. Halfway through the night he sat up, leaned close to the incense and breathed in deeply, but he couldn't smell anything.

At that moment he knew that he had lost his sense of smell.

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There were several princes who stepped down from their high horses and made friendly contacts with civil and military officials. Jin Yi'an also hosted two of these princes, both of whom came across as handsome, talented, bright, modest, and prudent out of fear that their ambitions would be revealed or their motives misunderstood.

Jin Yi'an wanted to ask them about Princess Chunmei and almost asked them several times, but restrained himself on each occasions. Two of her fiancés had died in succession, and as such she was definitely having a hard time. Jin Yi'an recalled how she looked the first time he left the White Pear Palace and he saw her standing

⁹⁰ White chrysanthemums symbolize grief and lamentation in Korea, China and Japan and are often used in funerals.

on the veranda, silently looking at him, her small silhouette dressed in white, ready to be crushed by the enormous wing-shaped roof above her.

The king was still alive, but had aged greatly in a short time and couldn't even make it to the morning assembly. The queen was already ruling in place of the emperor.⁹¹ The princes were not making their thoughts and feelings known publicly and all of the civil and military officials were trying to guess their real intentions.

Not long after the mid autumn festival, Jin Yi'an suddenly was appointed as the court investigator. As he kneeled before the king to thank him for this favor, he heard whispers from all around him; undulating like ripples in a pond. He extended two hands to receive the tray with his official seal, his hat, gown, and boots. He secretly rejoiced. Wasn't the purple gown was a certain sign of Princess Chunmei's invitation to enter the palace?

That night the prime minister held a feast welcoming all of the new officials taking office who all had heavy responsibilities and a long road ahead of them. But there was no mention made of politics and state affairs, and the Prime Minister only spoke intimately with them, showing that he intended to first establish close relationships with them and discuss other matters later. At the mention of Jin Yilin, he sighed sincerely and sorrowfully. "He was a true man." He said.

Jin Yi'an didn't know exactly what the Prime Minister was referring to, but he nodded along as if he knew.

By the time he returned to his residence it was the dead of night and the sound of horse hooves treading on limestone rung out in the night. Jin Yi'an had

⁹¹ No historical reference to a queen ruling in place of an emperor at this time could be found, although there were a few instances during the Silla Dynasty (57 BCE-935 CE).

drank some wine and was dizzy, with thoughts of the Prime Minister's words about Jin Yilin fading into moonlight all around him, with only one line stood out in his mind. He was a true man.

The butler was waiting at the entrance and when Jin Yi'an stepped out of the carriage supported by the butler's hand and he couldn't help asking him, "Why is your hand so cold?"

"Someone important is here," replied the butler softly, leaning toward Jin Yi'an's ear.

Jin Yi'an trembled as he completely shook of his stupor. He looked back and sure enough there was a carriage hidden in the shadow of the enclosure.

"The guest is in the east courtyard." The butler said as he led the way.

Jin Yi'an walked quickly behind the butler, his belly flaming with the heat of the wine as if there were firecrackers lighting up every corner of the inside of his body.

The butler stopped at the entrance to the east courtyard.

"If you need anything just call for me." Said the butler.

Jin Yi'an nodded and watched him turn and walk away. Then he ran toward the lighted room up ahead. "Princess Chunmei!" He called out.

The crown prince was sitting in the study. The conflagration of war had turned his face a deep bronze color, making him seem even more passionate than before. He heard Jin Yi'an call out and turned his head, looked him over from head to foot, his gaze finally settling on his new official clothes.

Jin Yi'an stopped in his tracks, unable to move, his robe surrounding him like a purple flame.

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